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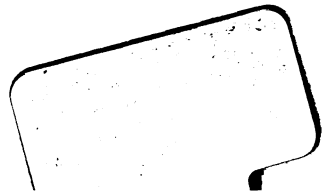
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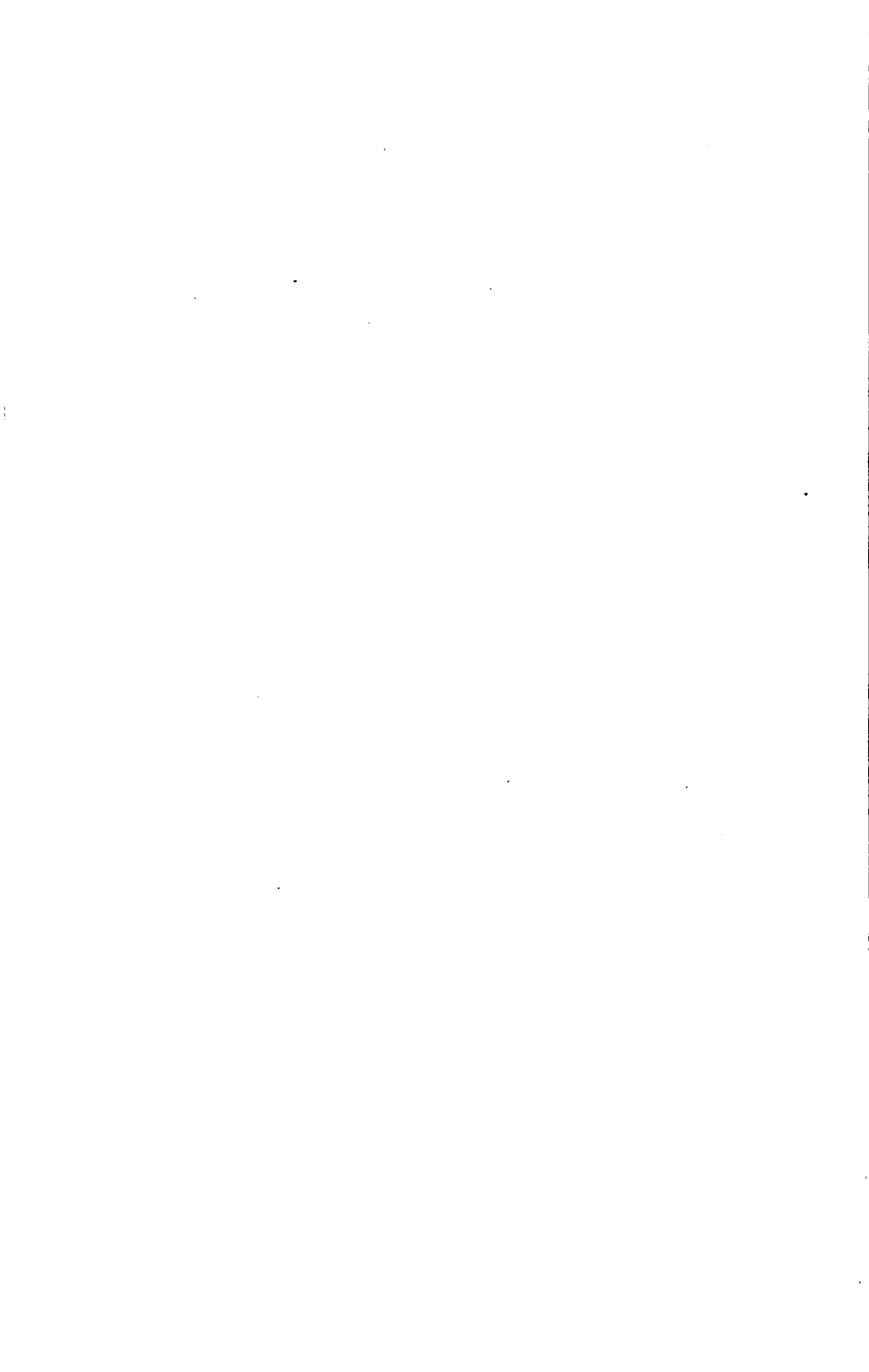
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THE BRIDE OF MESSINA.

C. RICHARDS, PRINTER, ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

THE BRIDE OF MESSINA:

A TRAGEDY WITH CHORUSES.

By Schiller.

TRANSLATED BY A. LODGE, ESQ., M.A.

LONDON:
JOHN BOHN, 17, HENRIETTA STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

1841.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ISABELLA, *Princess of Messina.*

DON MANUEL

DON CÆSAR

} *her Sons.*

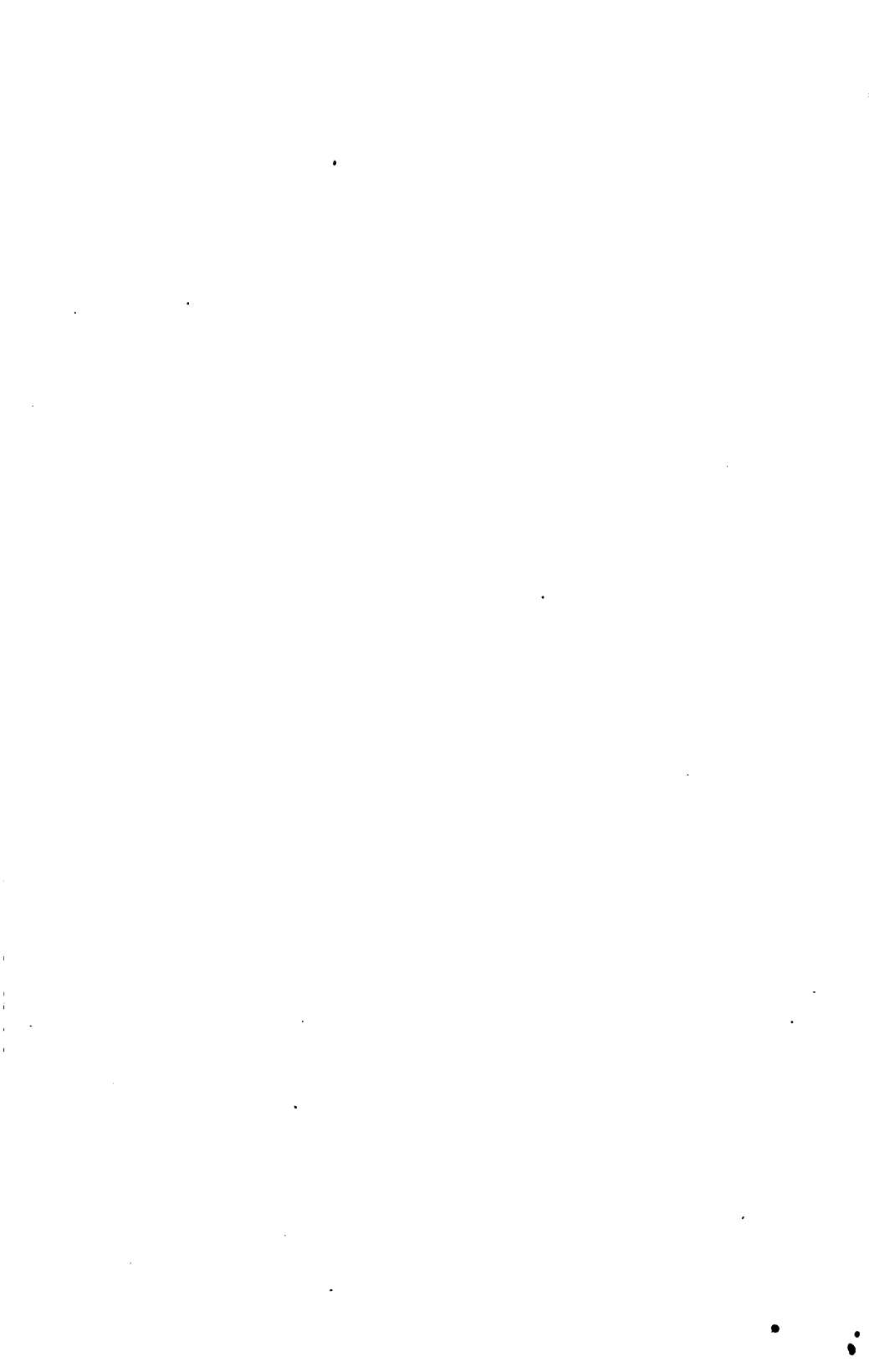
BEATRICE.

DIEGO, *an ancient Servant.*

MESSENGERS.

THE ELDERS OF MESSINA (*mute*).

THE CHORUS (*consisting of the Followers
of the two Princes*).



PREFACE.

OF this tragedy, one of the latest productions of the Author, and remarkable in the literature of Germany, as the declared illustration of his matured opinions on dramatic composition, little appears to be known in this country beyond the circle of German readers. As a purely poetical work it stands alone among his dramas, and in that regard may be cited, apart from its peculiarity of structure, and certain anomalies of conduct to which I shall advert, as concentrating his excellences, and evincing throughout the originality and variety of his powers. The subject affords a complete scope for that portraiture of the gentler affections in which Schiller stands unrivalled among his countrymen, and may rank

with the greatest masters of ancient or modern times. All the depth of feeling, passion, and tenderness, which formed the characteristics of his mind, are displayed with inimitable grace of expression and that delicacy of handling which the incidents more especially required. The delineation of maternal anguish, of wounded love and brotherly remorse, abounds with strokes of nature that find a response in every bosom ; their truth and pathos have a fitting homage in our tears.

The choral pieces are replete with those charms of sentiment and melody which distinguish our author's minor poems. They are equally marked by luxuriance of imagery, and by a lyrical freedom and variety, befitting their purpose as accompaniments of the action, which they illustrate in a style always in accordance with the subject, and sometimes by the loftiest strains of a serene and reflective wisdom. The poet speaks in union with the sublime and tender moralist.

Yet, with every testimony to the intrinsic

beauty of these effusions, it must be admitted, that, viewed as imitations of the choral ode of the Greek theatre, they have not fulfilled the author's purpose. With perhaps one or two exceptions, they have little or nothing of the vein and peculiar character of the Attic chorus,—of that indefinable grace and purity which recalls the perfect harmony of forms in Grecian art,—of its matchless simplicity and grandeur. It is probable that Schiller was imperfectly, if at all, acquainted with those masterpieces in the original language; added to which, the comparative ruggedness of the dialect in which his thoughts are conveyed precluded a close approximation to his model.

The end and uses of the Chorus, and the object of our author in the restoration of this important feature of the ancient drama, are enforced with great eloquence and ingenuity in a lengthened preface. The same essay comprehends those speculations on the ideal character of Art which this play was designed to exemplify.

“The Old Tragedy (says Schiller) introduced the Chorus as an essential accompaniment. The poets found it in Nature, and for that reason employed it. It grew out of the poetical aspect of real life. In the New Tragedy, it becomes an organ of Art which aids in making the poetry prominent. The modern poet no longer finds the Chorus in nature, he must needs create and introduce it poetically; that is, he must resolve on such an adaptation of his story, as will admit of its retrocession to those primitive times, and to that simple form of life.

“The Chorus thus renders more substantial service to the modern dramatist than to the old poet, and for this reason, that it transforms the commonplace actual world into the old poetical one,—that it enables him to dispense with all that is repugnant to poetry, and conducts him back to the simple, primitive, and genuine motives of action. The poet must reopen the palaces of kings, he must locate courts of justice beneath the canopy of heaven; he must reproduce every extreme which the artificial frame of actual life has abolished, throw aside every factitious influence on the mind or condition of man that impedes the manifestation of his inward nature and primitive character, as the statuary rejects modern costume; and of all external circumstances adopt nothing but what is palpable in the highest of forms, that of humanity.

“But precisely as the painter throws around his figures draperies of ample volume, to fill up the space of his picture richly and gracefully, to arrange its several parts in harmonious masses, to give due play to colour, which charms and refreshes the eye; and at once to envelope human forms in a spiritual veil, and make them visible—so the tragic poet inlays and entwines his rigidly contracted plot and the strong outlines of his characters with a tissue of lyrical magnificence, in which, as in flowing robes of purple, they move freely and nobly, with a sustained dignity and exalted repose.

“The Chorus is in itself not an individual but a general conception, yet it is represented by a palpable body, which appeals to the senses with an imposing grandeur. It forsakes the contracted sphere of the incidents to dilate itself over the past and future, over distant things and nations and general humanity, in order to deduce the grand results of life, and pronounce the lessons of wisdom.

“It is this that gives repose to the action. It is by holding asunder the different parts, and stepping between the passions with its composing views, that the Chorus restores us to our freedom, which would else be lost in the tempest. The characters of Tragedy themselves need this intermission, in order to collect themselves; for they are no real beings who obey the impulse of the moment, but ideal persons and repre-

sentatives of their species, who enunciate the deep things of humanity.”

The Chorus of this drama has been the theme of adverse criticism, on the score of its admixture with the active business ; and indeed this employment of an instrument, characterized by the author as a purely ideal one, is little in accordance with his own theories. The distinction which he alleges between the Chorus as one ideal person, and the individuals of whom the abstraction is composed, partakes of excessive refinement. If the latter be not exempt from the turmoil and stormy passions of the scene, what constitutes their fitness, in preference to the other characters, to stand forth as mediators and moralists, which he assigns as the peculiar function of the collective body ?

With regard to the subject and characteristic features of the work before us, I am tempted to quote the striking and apposite remarks of an able writer in “The Spectator.”

“The story is simple and even familiar. The scene is laid in Messina, shortly after the Norman conquest ; and the simplicity of the manners enables the poet to

lend simplicity of passion to his characters. Schiller's language is always nervous and full of meaning, but in this poem he has excelled himself. There is not a word in it which does not tell ; and the author seems to have concentrated in his verses all the passions which had at any time agitated himself, and all the wisdom with which study and observation had stored his mind. The imagery is luxuriant and characteristic. The place has inspired his imagination with the glowing beauty of a southern climate ; the time, with the thoughts and fancies called up by the fading relics of old Heathenism, with the inroads of Mahommedanism, on the one hand, and the equivocal Christianity of the sensual Sicilians and the iron Norsemen, on the other. A vein of subdued melancholy pervades the composition, softening the over-buoyant spirits without depressing them ; yet, on the whole, the tone of the poem is elevated and cheering. The subject is one that might have pleased young Schiller in the wildness of his untamed mood ; the handling is that of one whom years and experience had mellowed into the sage."

The introduction of the Pagan mythology in a drama of the Middle Age, will recal the Sicilian portion of "The Winter's Tale," in which

a prominent feature of the same superstition is made influential on the story. This license belongs to that absolute independence of the actual, which our author regards as the primary essential of a work of imagination; and, taken alone, may be sustained on his principles of the strictly ideal character of Art. But as these violations of historical truth must needs be softened by the remoteness of the era represented, so a certain consistency of details, and accommodation of the subject to the peculiar features introduced, is not less requisite to a becoming harmony of effect. The juxtaposition of Paganism and Christianity he admits to be difficult of excuse; and certainly the observation that "all religions form a collective whole for the operation of the imaginative faculty," if it be intelligible, is little to the purpose as an argument.

Illusion is not ranked by our author among the proper aims of the dramatic artist; but he has scarcely considered, that if the sense of propriety be shocked by a too manifest incongruity of parts, the real is at once in the ascendant, and poetical pleasure at an end.

Shakspear has avoided this error. It is true that in "The Winter's Tale" the language of heathenism is utterly at variance with the manners of the play; and I am aware that critics of high fame have dilated on the absurdities of that exquisite poetical creation. Yet in how few minds would a sense of absurdity be uppermost on reading the following passage:—

"I shall report,

For most it caught me, the celestial habits
 (Methinks I so should term them) and the reverence
 Of the grave wearers. O the sacrifice!
 How ceremonious, solemn, and unearthly
 It was i' the offering!"

"But of all, the burst

And the ear-deafening voice o' the Oracle,
 Kin to Jove's thunder, so surprised my sense,
 That I was nothing."

"Great Apollo,

Turn all to the best!"

It would be otherwise if these lines were preceded by a description of one of the ceremonies of Christian worship.

As to the following humble attempt to con-

vey to English readers some notion of this celebrated performance, a few words will suffice. It has been the aim of the translator to produce, not a close version of the author's language, but rather such a transcript of his thoughts, as might be animated by a portion of his spirit, and wear a certain air of originality. Literal translations, when in metre, can afford no pleasure ; they are scarcely read with patience, and of all others bear the least resemblance to the pattern. He has sometimes amplified, more frequently condensed, the original; in one or two passages slightly varied the sense, not from misapprehension of the Author, or, least of all, with a view to improvement, but solely from inability to express the precise meaning with more than a bare correctness. It must be remembered, that translation in verse presents other and greater difficulties than those of mere construction.

The second and third scenes, between pp. 13 and 18 of the version, and the soliloquy at p. 36, are considerably abridged. A few detached portions of the choruses are also omitted.

September 28th, 1841.

THE BRIDE OF MESSINA.

SCENE.—*A spacious hall, supported on columns, with entrances on both sides ; at the back of the stage a large folding-door leading to a chapel.*

DONNA ISABELLA, *in mourning.* *The Elders of Messina.*

ISABELLA.

Forth from my silent chamber's deep recesses,
Ye trusted hoary Counsellors, unwilling
I come ; and, shrinking from your gaze, uplift
The veil that shades my widowed brows. For ever
Lost is the light and glory of my days ;
And best in solitude and kindred gloom
To hide these sable weeds, this grief-worn frame,
Besems the mourner's heart. A mighty voice
Inexorable—duty's stern command,
Calls me to life again.—

Not twice the moon
Has filled her orb, since to his last repose

I bore my princely spouse, your city's lord—
 His people's strong defence—whose arm of power
 Against a world of envious foes around
 Hurl'd fierce defiance ! Still his spirit lives
 In his heroic sons, their country's pride :—
 You mark'd how sweetly from their childhood's bloom
 They grew in joyous promise to the years
 Of manhood's strength ;—yet in their secret hearts,
 From some mysterious root accurs'd, upgrew
 Unmitigable deadly hate, that spurn'd
 All kindred ties, all youthful fond affections,
 Still ripening with their thoughtful age ;—not mine
 The sweet accord of family bliss, tho' each
 Awoke a mother's rapture, each alike
 Smiled at my nourishing breast ! for me alone
 Yet lives one mutual thought, of children's love,
 In these tempestuous souls, dissevered else
 By mortal strife and thirst of fierce revenge.

While yet their father reigned, his stern control
 Tamed their hot spirits, and with iron yoke
 To awful justice bowed their stubborn will ;
 Obedient to his voice, to outward seeming
 They calmed their wrathful mood, nor in array
 Ere met, of hostile arms ;—yet unappeas'd
 Sat brooding malice in their bosoms' depths--
 They little reck of hidden springs whose power

Can quell the torrent's fury :—Scarce their sire
In death had closed his eyes, when, as the spark,
That long in smouldering embers sullen lay,
Shoots forth a towering flame ;—so unconfined
Burst the wild storm of brothers' hate, triumphant
O'er nature's holiest bands. Ye saw, my friends,
Your country's bleeding wounds, when princely strife
Woke discord's maddening fires, and ranged her sons
In mutual deadly conflict ;—all around
Was heard the clash of arms, the din of carnage,
And e'en these halls were stained with kindred gore.

Torn was the state with civil rage, this heart
With pangs that mothers feel ; alas ! unmindful
Of aught but public woes, and pitiless,
You sought my widow's chamber—there with taunts
And fierce reproaches for your country's ills
From that polluted spring of brothers' hate
Derived, invoked a parent's warning voice,
And threatening told of people's discontent
And princes' crimes ! “ Ill fated land ! now wasted
By thy unnatural sons, ere long the prey
Of foeman's sword ! Oh haste,” you cried, “ and end
This strife ; bring peace again, or soon Messina
Shall bow to other lords.” Your stern decree
Prevailed ; this heart, with all a mother's anguish
O'erlaboured, owned the weight of public cares.

I flew, and at my children's feet distracted
 A suppliant lay, till to my prayers and tears
 The voice of nature answered in their breasts !

Here in the palace of their sires, unarmed,
 In peaceful guise, Messina shall behold
 The long inveterate foes ;—this is the day !
 E'en now I wait the messenger that brings
 The tidings of my sons' approach : be ready
 To give your princes joyful welcome home ;
 For dire their strife—so from this glad accord,
 With thousand blessings on our happy land,
 Fair Peace shall smile.

(The Elders retire in silence ; she beckons to an old attendant who remains.)

ISABELLA.

Diego !

DIEGO.

Honoured mistress !

ISABELLA.

Old faithful servant, thou true heart, come near me ;
 Sharer of all a mother's woes, be thine
 The sweet communion of her joys :—my treasure
 Shrined in thy heart, my dear and holy secret,
 Shall pierce the envious veil, and shine triumphant

To cheerful day ; too long by harsh decrees
 Silent and overpowered, Affection yet
 Shall utterance find in Nature's tones of rapture,
 And this unprisoned heart leap to the embrace
 Of all it holds most dear, returned to glad
 My desolate halls :—

So bend thy aged steps
 To the old cloistered Sanctuary, that guards
 The darling of my soul, whose innocence
 To thy true love—(sweet pledge of happier days !)
 Trusting I gave, and asked from Fortune's storm
 A resting place and shrine : O in this hour
 Of bliss, the dear reward of all thy cares,
 Give to my longing arms my child again !

(Trumpets are heard in the distance.)

Haste ! be thy footsteps winged with joy—I hear
 The trumpet's blast, that tells in warlike accents,
 My sons are near :—

Exit DIEGO. *Music is heard in an opposite direction,
 and becomes gradually louder.*

Messina is awake !

Hark ! how the stream of tongues hoarse murmuring
 Rolls on the breeze,—'tis they ! my mother's heart
 Feels their approach, and beats with mighty throes
 Responsive to the loud resounding march !
 They come ! they come ! my children ! oh, my children !

[*Exit.*

The CHORUS enters.

(It consists of two semi-choruses which enter at the same time from opposite sides, and after marching round the stage range themselves in rows, each on the side by which it entered. One semi-chorus consists of young knights, the other of older ones, each has its peculiar costume and ensigns. When the two choruses stand opposite to each other, the march ceases, and the two leaders speak.)*

First Chorus (CAJETAN.)

I greet ye, glittering halls
 Of olden time !
 Cradle of kings ! hail lordly roof
 In pillared majesty sublime.

Sheathed be the sword !
 In chains before the portal lies
 The fiend with tresses snake-entwined,
 Fell Discord !—Gently tread the inviolate floor !
 Peace to this royal dome !
 Thus by the Furies brood we swore,
 And all the dark avenging Deities !

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND.)

I rage ! I burn ! and scarce refrain
 To lift the glittering steel on high,

* The first chorus consists of Cajetan, Berengar, Manfred, Tristan, and eight followers of Don Manuel. The second of Bohemund, Roger, Hippolyte, and nine others of the party of Don Cæsar.

For lo ! the Gorgon-visaged train
 Of the detested foeman nigh :—
 Shall I my swelling heart control
 To parley deign—or still in mortal strife
 The tumult of my soul ?
 Dire sister, guardian of the spot, to thee
 Awe-struck I bend the knee,
 Nor dare with arms profane thy deep tranquillity!

First Chorus (CAJETAN.)

Welcome the peaceful strain!
 Together we adore the guardian power
 Of these august abodes :—
 Sacred the hour
 To kindred brotherly ties
 And reverend holy sympathies ;—
 Our hearts the genial charm shall own,
 And melt awhile at friendship's soothing tone :—
 But when in yonder plain
 We meet—then peace away!
 Come gleaming arms, and battle's deadly fray !

The whole Chorus.

But when in yonder plain
 We meet—then peace away !
 Come gleaming arms, and battle's deadly fray !

First Chorus (BERENGAR.)

I hate thee not—nor call thee foe,
 My brother ! this our native earth,
 The land that gave our fathers birth ;
 Of chief's behest the slave decreed,
 The vassal draws the sword at need.
 For chieftain's rage we strike the blow,
 For foreign lords our kindred blood must flow.

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND.)

Hate fires their souls—we ask not why ;—
 At honour's call to fight and die,
 Boast of the free and brave !
 Unworthy of a soldier's name
 Who burns not for his chieftain's fame.

The whole Chorus.

Unworthy of a soldier's name
 Who burns not for his chieftain's fame !

One of the Chorus (BERENGAR.)

Thus spoke within my bosom's core
 The thought—as hitherward I strayed ;
 And pensive mid the waving store,
 I mused, of Autumn's yellow glade :—
 These gifts of Nature's bounteous reign,—
 The teeming earth, and golden grain,

Yon elms, among whose leaves entwine
 The tendrils of the clustering vine ;—
 Gay offspring of our sunny clime,
 Region of Spring's eternal prime ;—
 Each charm should woo to love and joy,
 No cares the dream of bliss annoy,
 And Pleasure through life's summer day
 Speed every laughing Hour away.
 We rage in blood,—O dire disgrace !
 For this usurping, alien race ;
 From some far distant land they came,
 Beyond the sun's departing flame.
 And owned upon our friendly shore
 The welcome of our sires of yore.
 Alas ! their sons in thralldom pine,
 The vassals of this stranger line.

A second (MANFRED).

Yes ! pleased, on our land, from his azure way,
 The Sun ever smiles with unclouded ray.
 But never, fair isle, shall thy sons repose
 'Mid the sweets which the faithless waves enclose.
 On their bosom they wafted the corsair bold,
 With his dreaded barks to our coast of old.
 For thee was thy dower of beauty vain,
 'Twas the treasure that lured the spoiler's train.

Oh, ne'er from these smiling vales shall rise
 A sword for our vanquished liberties ;
 'Tis not where the laughing Ceres reigns,
 And the jocund lord of the flowery plains :—
 Where the iron lies hid in the mountain cave,
 Spring the men of empire, the free and brave.

(The folding doors at the back of the stage are thrown open. DONNA ISABELLA appears between her sons, DON MANUEL and DON CESAR.)

Both Choruses (CAJETAN.)

Lift high the notes of praise !
 See ! like the awakening Sun
 She comes, and from her queenly brow
 Shoots glad-inspiring rays.
 Mistress, we bend to thee !

First Chorus.

Fair is the moon amid the starry quire
 That twinkle o'er the sky,
 Shining in silvery mild tranquillity :—
 The mother with her sons more fair !
 See ! blooming at her side,
 She leads the youthful royal pair ;
 With gentle grace, and soft maternal pride,
 Attempering sweet their manly fire.

Second Chorus (BERENGAR).

From this fair stem a beauteous tree
 With ever springing boughs shall smile,
 And with immortal verdure shade our isle ;
 Mother of heroes, joy to thee !
 Triumphant as the sun thy kingly race
 Shall spread from clime to clime,
 And give a deathless name to rolling time !

ISABELLA (comes forward with her Sons.)

Look down ! benignant Queen of Heaven, and still
 This proud tumultuous heart, that in my breast
 Swells with a mother's tide of extacy,
 As blazoned in these noble youths, my image
 More perfect shows ;—O blissful hour ! the first
 That comprehends the fulness of my joy,
 When long constrained affection dares to pour
 In unison of transport from my heart
 Unchecked, a mother's undivided love :
 Oh ! it was ever one—my sons were twain.
 Say—shall I revel in the dream of bliss,
 And give my soul to nature's dear emotions ?
 Is this warm pressure of thy brother's hand
 A dagger in thy breast ? [To DON MANUEL
Or when my eyes
 Feed on that brow with love's enraptured gaze,

Is it a wrong to thee? . . . [To DON CÆSAR.

Trembling, I pause,
Lest e'en affection's breath should wake the fires
Of slumbering hate.

(After regarding both with enquiring looks.)

Speak! in your secret hearts
What purpose dwells? Is it the ancient feud
Unreconciled, that in your father's halls
A moment stilled; beyond the castle gates,
Where sits infuriate War, and champs the bit,—
Shall rage anew in mortal bloody conflict?

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Concord or strife—the Fates' decree
Is bosomed yet in dark futurity!—
What comes, we little heed to know,
Prepared for aught the hour may show!

ISABELLA (looking round).

What mean these arms? this warlike dread array,
That in the palace of your sires portends
Some fearful issue? needs a mother's heart
Outpoured, this rugged witness of her joys?
Say, in these folding arms shall Treason hide
The deadly snare?—O these rude pitiless men,
The ministers of your wrath!—trust not the show

Of seeming friendship ; treachery in their breasts
 Lurks to betray, and long-dissembled hate.
 Ye are a race of other lands, your sires
 Profaned their soil ; and ne'er the invader's yoke
 Was easy,—never in the vassal's heart
 Languished the hope of sweet revenge,—our sway
 Not rooted in a people's love, but owns
 Allegiance from their fears ; with secret joy—
 For conquest's ruthless sword, and thralldom's chains
 From age to age, they wait the atoning hour
 Of princes' downfall ;—thus their bards awake
 The patriot strain, and thus from sire to son
 Rehearsed, the old traditionary tale
 Beguiles the winter's night :—

False is the world,

My sons, and light are all the fragile ties
 Of specious happiness ; the band of friendship
 Unstable as the waves ;—Nature alone
 On her eternal anchor lies at rest
 Amid the storms of life.

DON MANUEL *and* DON CÆSAR.

My mother—hear me !

ISABELLA (*taking their hands*).

Be noble, and forget the fancied wrongs
 Of boyhood's age : more godlike is forgiveness

Than victory, and in your father's grave
 Should sleep the ancient hate : —Oh, give your days
 Renewed henceforth to peace and holy love !

(She recedes one or two steps, as if to give them space to approach each other. Both fix their eyes on the ground without regarding one another.)

ISABELLA.

(After awaiting for some time, with suppressed emotion, a demonstration on the part of her sons.)

I can no more ; a mother's prayers are vain :
 'Tis well ! obey the demon in your hearts !
 Fulfil your dread intent, and stain with blood
 The holy altars of our household Gods ;—
 These halls, that gave you birth, the stage where
 Murder
 Shall hold his festival of mutual carnage
 Beneath a mother's eye !—then foot to foot,
 Close, like the Theban pair, with maddening gripe,
 And fold each other in a last embrace !
 Each press with vengeful thrust the dagger home,
 And “ Victory ! ” be your shriek of death :—Nor then
 Shall discord rest appeased ; the very flame
 That lights your funeral pyre shall tower dis severed
 In ruddy columns to the skies, and tell
 With horrid image—“ thus they lived and died ! ”

(She goes away ; the Brothers stand as before.)

Chorus (CAJETAN).

How have her words with soft controul
 Resistless calmed the tempest of my soul.
 No guilt of kindred blood be mine !
 Thus with uplifted hands I pray ;
 Think brothers on the awful day !
 And tremble at the wrath divine.

DON CÆSAR (*without taking his eyes from the ground*).

Thou art my elder—speak—without dishonour
 I yield to thee.

DON MANUEL.

One gracious word, and straight
 My lips shall emulate thy fair example.

DON CÆSAR.

I am the guiltier—weaker—

DON MANUEL.

Say not so !

Who doubts thy noble heart, knows thee not well ;
 Thy words were prouder, if thy soul were mean.

DON CÆSAR.

It burns indignant at the thought of wrong ;—
 But thou—methinks in conflict's hottest rage,
 'Twas aught but scorn that harboured in thy breast.

DON MANUEL.

O, had I known thy spirit thus to peace inclined,
What thousand griefs had never torn
A mother's heart !

DON CÆSAR.

I find thee just and true :
Men spoke thee proud of soul.

DON MANUEL.

The curse of greatness !—
Ears ever open to the babbler's tale.

DON CÆSAR.

We were deceived, betrayed !

DON MANUEL.

The sport of passion !

DON CÆSAR.

And said my mother true, false is the world ?

DON MANUEL.

Believe her, false as air.

DON CÆSAR.

Give me thy hand.

DON MANUEL.

And thine be ever next my heart !

(They stand clasping each other's hands, and regard each other in silence.)

DON CÆSAR.

I gaze

Upon thy brow, and still my mother smiles
In some dear lineament.

DON MANUEL.

Her image looks

From thine, and wondrous in my bosom wakes
Affection's springs.

DON CÆSAR.

And is it thou ?—that smile
Benignant on thy face, thy lips that charm
With gracious sounds of love and dear forgiveness ?

DON MANUEL.

Is this my brother, this the hated foe ?
His mien all gentleness and truth,—the voice
Whose soft prevailing accents breathe of friendship !

(After a pause.)

DON CÆSAR.

Shall aught divide us ?

DON MANUEL.

We are one for ever !

(They rush into each other's arms.)

First Chorus to the Second.

Why stand we thus, and coldly gaze,
 While Nature's holy transports burn ?
 No dear embrace of happier days
 The pledge—that discord never shall return !
 Brothers are they by kindred band,
 We own the ties of home and native land.

(Both Chorusses embrace.)

A MESSENGER enters.

Second Chorus to DON CÆSAR (BOHEMUND).

Rejoice, my prince, thy messenger returns.
 And mark that beaming smile ! the harbinger
 Of happy tidings.

MESSENGER.

Health to me, and health
 To this delivered state ! O sight of bliss,
 That lights mine eyes with rapture ! I behold—
 Their hands in sweet accord entwined—the sons
 Of my departed lord—the princely pair
 Dissevered late by conflict's hottest rage.

DON CÆSAR.

Yes ! from the flames of hate, a new-born Phoenix,
 Our love aspires !

MESSENGER.

I bring another joy—
My staff is green with flourishing shoots.

DON CÆSAR.

(Taking him aside.)

O tell me
Thy gladsome message.

MESSENGER.

All is happiness
On this auspicious day;—long sought, the lost one
Is found.

DON CÆSAR.

Discovered! oh, where is she? speak!

MESSENGER.

Within Messina's walls she lies concealed.

DON MANUEL.

(Turning to the first Semichorus.)

A ruddy glow mounts in my brother's cheek,
And pleasure dances in his sparkling eye;
Whate'er the spring, with sympathy of love
My inmost heart partakes his joy.

DON CÆSAR *(to the Messenger)*.

Come, lead me;
Farewell, Don Manuel, to meet again

Enfolded in a mother's arms ! I fly
To cares of utmost need.

(He is about to depart.)

DON MANUEL.

Make no delay :

And happiness attend thee !

DON CÆSAR.

(After a pause of reflection, he returns.)

How thy looks

Awake my soul to transport ! Yes, my brother,
We shall be friends indeed ! This hour is bright
With glad presage of ever-springing love,
That in the enlivening beam shall flourish fair,
Sweet recompense of wasted years.

DON MANUEL.

The blossom

Betokens goodly fruit.

DON CÆSAR.

I tear myself

Reluctant from thy arms, but think not less—
If thus I break this festal hour, my heart
Thrills with a holy joy.

DON MANUEL.

(With manifest absence of mind.)

Obeys the moment !

Our lives belong to love.

DON CÆSAR.

What calls me hence——

DON MANUEL.

Enough ! thou leav'st thy heart.

DON CÆSAR.

No envious secret
Shall part us long ; soon the last darkening fold
Shall vanish from my breast.

(Turning to the Chorus.)

Attend ! for ever
Stilled is our strife ; he is my deadliest foe,
Detested as the gates of hell, who dares
To blow the fires of discord : — none may hope
To win my love, that with malicious tales
Encroach upon a brother's ear, and point,
With busy zeal of false officious friendship,
The dart of some rash angry word, escaped
From passion's heat :—it wounds not from the lips,
But swallowed by suspicion's greedy ear,
Like a rank poisonous weed, embittered creeps,
And hangs about the heart with thousand shoots,
Perplexing Nature's ties.

*(He embraces his brother again, and goes away,
accompanied by the second Chorus.)*

Chorus (CAJETAN).

Wondering, my Prince,
 I gaze, for in thy looks some mystery
 Strange-seeming shows : scarce with abstracted mien
 And cold thou answered'st, when with earnest heart
 Thy brother poured the strain of dear affection.
 As in a dream thou stand'st, and lost in thought,
 As tho'—dissevered from its earthly frame—
 Thy spirit roved afar. Not thine the breast
 That deaf to Nature's voice, ne'er owned the throbs
 Of kindred love—nay more—like one entranced
 In bliss, thou look'st around, and smiles of rapture
 Play on thy cheek.

DON MANUEL.

How shall my lips declare
 The transports of my swelling heart ? my brother
 Revels in glad surprise, and from his breast
 Instinct with strange unfelt emotions, pours
 The tide of joy ; but mine——no hate came with me,
 Forgot the very spring of mutual strife !
 High o'er this earthly sphere, on rapture's wings,
 My spirit floats, and in the azure sea,
 Above—beneath—no track of envious night
 Disturbs the deep serene ! I view these halls,

And picture to my thoughts the timid joy
 Of my sweet bride, as thro' the palace gates
 In pride of queenly state I lead her home.
 She loved alone the loving one, the stranger,
 And little deems that on her beauteous brow
 Messina's prince shall 'twine the nuptial wreath.
 How sweet with unexpected pomp of greatness
 To glad the darling of my soul!—too long
 I brook this dull delay of crowning bliss.
 Her beauty's self, that asks no borrow'd charm,
 Shall shine refulgent, like the diamond's blaze
 That wins new lustre from the circling gold!

Chorus (CAJETAN).

Long have I marked thee, Prince, with curious eye,
 Foreboding of some mystery deep enshrined
 Within thy labouring breast. This day, thy lips
 Impatient burst the seal, and unconstrained
 Confess a lover's joy;—the gladdening chase,
 The Olympian coursers, and the falcon's flight,
 Can charm no more:—soon as the sun declines
 Beneath the ruddy west, thou hie'st thee quick
 To some sequestered path, of mortal eye
 Unseen,—not one of all our faithful train
 Companion of thy solitary way.
 Say why so long concealed the blissful flame?

Stranger to fear, ill-brooked thy princely heart
The envious veil.

DON MANUEL.

For ever on the wing
Is mortal joy ;—with silence best we guard
The fickle good ;—but now—so near the goal
Of all my cherished hopes, I dare to speak.
To-morrow's sun shall see her mine ! no power
Of hell can make us twain ! With timid stealth
No longer shall I creep at dusky eve
To taste the golden fruits of Cupid's tree,
And snatch a fearful, fleeting bliss :—today
With bright tomorrow shall be one ! So smooth
As runs the limpid brook or silvery sand
That marks the flight of time, our lives shall flow
In continuity of joy !

Chorus (CAJETAN).

Already
Our hearts, my Prince, with silent vows have blessed
Thy happy love ; and now from every tongue
For her, the royal beauteous bride, should sound
The glad acclaim ; so tell, what nook unseen,
What deep umbrageous solitude enshrines
The charmer of thy soul ? With magic spells
Almost I deem she mocks our gaze, for oft

In eager chase we scour each rustic path
And forest dell ; yet not a trace betrayed
The lover's haunts, ne'er were the footsteps marked
Of this mysterious fair.

DON MANUEL.

The spell is broke !
And all shall be revealed : now list my tale :—
'Tis five months flown,—my father yet controlled
The land, and bowed our necks with iron sway ;
Little I knew, but the wild joys of arms,
And mimic warfare of the chase.—

One day,
Long had we tracked the boar with zealous toil
On yonder woody ridge—it chanced, pursuing
A snow-white hind, far from your train I roved
Amid the forest maze ;—the timid beast,
Thro' rocky clefts and thick-entangled brake,
Flew onwards, ever in my sight, nor distant
Beyond a javelin's throw ; nearer I came not,
Nor took an aim ; when thro' a garden's gate,
Sudden she vanished ; from my horse quick springing,
I followed:—lo ! the poor scared creature lay
Stretched at the feet of a young beauteous nun,
That strove with fond caress of her fair hands
To still its throbbing heart : wondering, I gazed,

And motionless—my spear, in act to strike,
 High poised—while she, with her large piteous eyes
 For mercy sued—and thus we stood in silence,
 Regarding one another

How long the pause

I know not—time itself forgot—it seemed
 Eternity of bliss—her glance of sweetness
 Flew to my soul, and quick the subtle flame
 Pervaded all my heart.—

But what I spoke,

And how this blessed creature answered, none
 May ask ; it floats upon my thought, a dream
 Of childhood's happy dawn ! Soon as my sense
 Returned, I felt her bosom throb responsive
 To mine,—then fell melodious on my ear
 The sound as of a convent bell, that called
 To vesper prayers ; and like some shadowy vision
 Dissolving into air—sudden she vanished,
 Nor left a trace behind !

Chorus (CAJETAN).

Thy story thrills

My breast with pious awe ! Prince, thou hast robbed
 The sanctuary, and for the bride of heaven
 Burned with unholy passion ! O remember
 The cloister's sacred vows.

DON MANUEL.

Thenceforth one path

My footsteps wooed ; the fickle train was still
 Of young desires—new felt my being's aim,
 My soul revealed :—and as the pilgrim turns
 His ardent gaze, where, smiling in the east,
 With gracious lustre beams Redemption's star ;—
 So to that brightest point of heaven, her presence,
 My hopes and longings centered all. No sun
 Sank in the western waves, but smiled farewell
 To two united lovers :—thus in stillness
 Our hearts were twined,—the all-seeing air above us
 Alone the faithful witness of our joys !
 O golden hours ! O happy days ! nor Heaven
 Indignant viewed our bliss ;—no vows enchained
 Her spotless soul ; nought but the link which bound it
 Eternally to mine !

Chorus (CAJETAN).

Those hallowed walls,
 Perchance the calm retreat of tender youth,
 No living grave ?

DON MANUEL.

In infant innocence
 Consigned a holy pledge, ne'er has she left
 Her cloistered home.

Chorus (CAJETAN).

But what her royal line?
The noble only spring from noble stem.

DON MANUEL.

A secret to herself,—ne'er has she known
Her name or father land.

Chorus (CAJETAN).

And not a trace
Guides to her being's undiscovered springs?

DON MANUEL.

An old domestic, the sole messenger
Between a mother and her child, bespeaks her
Of kingly race.

Chorus (CAJETAN).

And hast thou won nought else
From garrulous age?

DON MANUEL.

Too much I feared to peril
My secret bliss!

Chorus (CAJETAN).

What were his words? what tidings
He bore, perchance thou know'st.

DON MANUEL.

Oft he has cheered her
With promise of a happier time, when all
Shall be revealed.

Chorus (CAJETAN).

O say—betokens aught
The time's approach?

DON MANUEL.

Not distant far the day
That to the arms of kindred love once more
Shall give the long forsaken, orphaned maid—
Thus with mysterious words the aged man
Has shadowed oft what most I dread—for aught
Of change disturbs the soul supremely blest:
Nay, more; but yesterday his message spoke
The end of all my joys:—this very dawn,
He told, should smile auspicious on her fate,
And light to other scenes:—no precious hour
Delayed my quick resolves—by night I bore her
In secret to Messina.

Chorus (CAJETAN).

Rash the deed
 Of sacrilegious spoil ! forgive, my Prince,
 The bold rebuke ; thus to unthinking youth
 Old age may speak in friendship's warning voice.

DON MANUEL.

Hard by the convent of the Carmelites,
 In a sequestered garden's tranquil bound,
 And safe from curious gaze, I left her,—hastening
 To meet my brother : trembling there she counts
 The slow-paced hours, nor deems how soon triumphant
 In queenly state, high on the throne of Fame
 Messina shall behold my timid bride.
 For next, encompassed by your knightly train,
 With pomp of greatness in the festal show,
 Her lover's form shall meet her wondering gaze !
 Thus will I lead her to my mother ; thus—
 While countless thousands on her passage wait
 Amid the loud acclaim—the royal bride
 Shall reach my palace gates !

Chorus (CAJETAN).

Command us, Prince,
 We live but to obey !

DON MANUEL.

I tore myself

Reluctant from her arms ; my every thought
Shall still be hers : so come along, my friends,
To where the turbaned merchant spreads his store
Of fabrics, gold enwrought with curious art,
And all the gathered wealth of eastern climes.
First choose the well-formed sandals—meet to guard
And grace her delicate feet ; then for her robe—
The tissue pure as Etna's snow, that lies
Nearest the sun—light as the wreathy mist
At summer dawn—so playful let it float
About her airy limbs. A girdle next ;
Purple, with gold embroidered o'er, to bind
With witching grace the tunic that confines
Her bosom's swelling charms : of silk the mantle,
Gorgeous with like empurpled hues, and fixed
With clasp of gold :—remember, too, the bracelets
To gird her beauteous arms ; nor leave the treasure
Of Ocean's pearly deeps and coral caves.
About her locks entwine a diadem
Of purest gems—the ruby's fiery glow
Commingling with the emerald's green. A veil,
From her tiara pendent to her feet
Like a bright fleecy cloud shall play about
Her slender form : and let a myrtle wreath
Crown the enchanting whole !

Chorus (CAJETAN).

We haste, my prince,
Amid the Bazar's glittering store, to cull
Each rich adornment.

DON MANUEL.

From my stables lead
A palfrey, milkwhite as the steeds that draw
The chariot of the Sun ; purple the housings,
The bridle sparkling o'er with precious gems,
For it shall bear my Queen ! Yourselves be ready
With trumpets' cheerful clang, in martial train
To lead your mistress home : let two attend me,
The rest await my quick return ; and each
Guard well my secret purpose.

(He goes away, accompanied by two of the Chorus.)

Chorus (CAJETAN).

The princely strife is o'er, and say
What sport shall wing the slow-paced hours,
And cheat the tedious day ?
With hope and fear's enlivening zest
Disturb the slumber of the breast,
And wake life's dull untroubled sea
With freshening airs of gay variety.

One of the Chorus (MANFRED).

Lovely is Peace ! a beauteous boy,
Upon the streamlet's verdant shore

Cradled in rural calm tranquillity,
 He views the lambs that skip with innocent joy,
 And crop the meadow's flowery store ;—
 Then with his flute's enchanting sound,
 He wakes the mountain echoes round,
 Or slumbers in the sunset's ruddy sheen,
 Lulled by the murmuring melody.
 But war for me ! my spirit's treasure,
 Its stern delight, and wilder pleasure :
 I love the peril and the pain,
 And revel in the surge of Fortune's boisterous main !

A second (BERENGAR).

Is there not Love, and beauty's smile
 That lures with soft resistless wile ?
 'Tis thrilling hope ! 'tis rapturous fear !
 'Tis Heaven upon this mortal sphere ;
 When at her feet we bend the knee,
 And own the glance of kindred ecstasy !
 For ever on life's chequered way,
 'Tis Love that tints the darkening hues of care
 With soft benignant ray :
 The mirthful daughter of the wave,
 Celestial Venus ever fair,
 Enchants our happy spring with Fancy's gleam,
 And wakes the airy forms of Passion's golden dream.

First (MANFRED).

To the wild woods away !
 Quick let us follow in the train
 Of her, chaste Huntress of the silver bow ;
 And from the rocks amain
 Track through the forest gloom the bounding roe.
 The war God's merry bride,
 The chase recalls the battle's fray,
 And kindles victory's pride.
 Up with the streaks of early morn
 We scour with jocund hearts the misty vale,
 Loud echoing to the cheerful horn—
 Over mountain—over dale,
 And every wearied sense repair,
 Bathed in the rushing streams of cold reviving air.

Second (BERENGAR).

Or shall we trust the ever-moving sea,
 The azure Goddess blithe and free,
 Whose face the mirror of the cloudless sky
 Lures to her bosom wooingly ?
 Quick let us build on the dancing waves
 A floating castle gay,
 And merrily, merrily, swim away !
 Who ploughs with venturous keel the brine
 Of the ocean chrystalline—

His bride is Fortune, the world his own,
 For him a harvest blooms unsown ;
 Here like the wind that swift careers
 The circling bound of earth and sky,
 Flits ever changeful Destiny !
 Of airy Chance 'tis the sportive reign,
 And Hope ever broods on the boundless main.

A third (CAJETAN).

Nor on the watery waste alone
 Of the tumultuous heaving sea,—
 On the firm earth, that sleeps secure,
 Based on the pillars of eternity.
 Say, when shall mortal joy endure ?
 New bodings in my anxious breast,
 Waked by this sudden friendship, rise.
 Ne'er would I choose my home of rest
 On the lava's bed, that still and cold
 Beneath the mountain lies :—
 Not thus was Discord's flame controlled—
 Too deep the rooted hate, too long
 They brooded in their sullen hearts
 O'er unforgotten treasured wrong.
 In warning visions oft dismayed,
 I read the signs of coming woe ;
 And now, from this mysterious maid

My bosom tells the dreaded ills shall flow,
 Unblest I deem the bridal chain
 Shall knit their secret loves, accurst
 With holy cloisters' spoil profane.
 No crooked paths to Virtue lead—
 Ill fruit has ever sprung from evil seed !

BERENGAR.

And thus to sad unhallowed rites
 Of an ill-omened nuptial tie,
 Too well ye know their father bore
 A bride of mournful destiny,
 Torn from his sire, whose awful curse has sped
 Heaven's vengeance on the impious bed.
 This fierce unnatural rage atones
 A parent's crime—decreed by Fate,
 Their mother's offspring, Strife and Hate !

The scene changes to a garden opening on the sea.

BEATRICE (*steps forward from an alcove*).

(She walks to and fro with an agitated air, looking round in every direction. Suddenly she stands still and listens.)

No ! 'tis not he : 'twas but the playful wind
 Rustling the pine tops. To his ocean bed
 The sun declines, and with o'er-wearied heart

I count the lagging hours : an icy chill
 Creeps through my frame ; the very solitude
 And awful silence fright my trembling soul !
 Where'er I turn, nought meets my gaze—he leaves me
 Forsaken and alone !——
 And like a rushing stream the city's hum
 Floats on the breeze, and dull the mighty sea
 Rolls murmuring to the rocks : I shrink to nothing
 With horrors compassed round ; and like the leaf
 Borne on the autumn blast, am hurried onward
 Thro' boundless space.——

Alas ! that e'er I left

My peaceful cell—no cares, no fond desires
 Disturbed my breast, unruffled as the stream
 That glides in sunshine through the verdant mead :—
 Nor poor in joys. Now—on the mighty surge
 Of Fortune, tempest-tossed, the world enfolds me
 With giant arms ! Forgot my childhood's ties,
 I listened to the lover's flattering tale—
 Listened, and trusted ! From the sacred dome
 Allured—betrayed,—for sure some hell-born magic
 Enchained my phrenzied sense,—I fled with him,
 The invader of Religion's dread abodes !

Where art thou, my beloved ? haste—return—
 With thy dear presence calm my struggling soul !

(She listens.)

Hark! the sweet voice! No! 'twas the echoing surge
 That beats upon the shore;—alas! he comes not.
 More faintly o'er the distant waves the Sun
 Gleams with expiring ray;—a deathlike shudder
 Creeps to my heart, and sadder, drearier, grows
 E'en desolation's self.

(She walks to and fro, then listens again.)

Yes! from the thicket shade
 A voice resounds!—'tis he!—the loved one!
 No fond illusion mocks my listening ear:—
 'Tis louder—nearer,—to his arms I fly—
 To his breast!

*(She rushes with outstretched arms to the extremity of
 the garden. DON CÆSAR meets her.)*

DON CÆSAR. BEATRICE.

BEATRICE *(starting back in horror)*.

What do I see!

(At the same moment the Chorus comes forward.)

DON CÆSAR.

Angelic sweetness! fear not.

[To the Chorus

Retire! your gleaming arms and rude array
 Affright the timorous maid.

[To BEATRICE

Fear nothing !—beauty
And virgin shame are sacred in my eyes.

(The Chorus steps aside.)

He approaches and takes her hand.)

Where hast thou been ? for sure some envious Power
Has hid thee from my gaze : long have I sought thee :
E'en from the hour, when 'mid the funeral rites
Of the dead Prince, like some angelic vision,
Lit with celestial brightness, on my sight
Thou shon'st,—no other image in my breast,
Waking or dreaming, lives ;—nor to thyself
Unknown thy potent spells ; my glance of fire,
My faltering accents, and my hand that lay
Trembling in thine, bespoke my ecstasy !
Aught else with solemn majesty the rite
And holy place forbade :—

The bell proclaimed

The awful Sacrifice ! with downcast eyes,
And kneeling, I adored ;—soon as I rose,
And caught with eager gaze thy form again,
Sudden it vanished ; yet, with mighty magic
Of love enchained, my spirit tracked thy presence ;
Nor ever, with unwearied quest, I cease,
At palace gates, amid the temple's throng,
In secret paths retired, or public scenes,
Where beauteous innocence perchance might rove,

To mark each passing form—in vain : but, guided
 By some propitious Deity, this day
 One of my train, with happy vigilance,
 Espied thee in the neighbouring church.

*(BEATRICE, who has stood trembling, with averted eyes,
 here makes a gesture of terror.)*

I see thee
 Once more ;—and may the spirit from this frame
 Be severed e'er we part ! Now let me snatch
 This glad auspicious moment, and defy
 Or chance, or envious demon's power, to shake
 Henceforth my solid bliss ;—here I proclaim thee,
 Before this listening warlike train, my bride !
 With pledge of knightly honours.

(He shows her to the Chorus.)

Who thou art,
 I ask not :—thou art mine ! but that thy soul
 And birth are pure alike, one glance informed
 My inmost heart ; and though thy lot were mean,
 And poor thy lowly state, yet would I strain thee
 With rapture to my arms ;—no choice remains,
 Thou art my love—my wife ! Know too, that lifted
 On fortune's height, I spurn control ; my will
 Can raise thee to the pinnacle of greatness ;
 Enough my name—I am Don Cæsar ! none
 Is nobler in Messina !

(*BEATRICE starts back in amazement. He remarks her agitation, and after a pause continues.*)

What a grace
Lives in thy soft surprise, and modest silence!
Yes! gentle humbleness is beauty's crown—
The Beautiful for ever hid, and shrinking
From its own lustre :—but thy spirit needs
Repose,—for aught of strange, e'en sudden joy,
Is terror-fraught—I leave thee—

(*Turning to the Chorus.*)

From this hour
She is your mistress, and my bride ;—so teach her
With honors due to entertain the pomp
Of queenly state. I will return with speed,
And lead her home as fits Messina's Princess !

[*He goes away.*]

BEATRICE and the Chorus.

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Fair maiden—hail to thee
Thou lovely Queen ;
Thine is the crown, and thine the victory.
Of heroes, to a distant age,
The blooming mother thou shalt shine,
Preserver of this kingly line.



(ROGER.)

And thrice I bid thee hail
Thou happy fair !
Sent in auspicious hour to bless
This favoured race, the gods' peculiar care.
Here twine the immortal wreaths of Fame,
And evermore from sire to son
Rolls on the sceptered sway,
To heirs of old renown, a race of deathless name !

(BOHEMUMD.)

The household Gods exultingly
Thy coming wait ;
The ancient, honored Sires,
That on the portals frown sedate,
Shall smile for thee !
There blooming Hebe shall thy steps attend,
And golden Victory, that sits
By Jove's eternal throne, with waving plumes,
For conquest ever spread,
To welcome thee from Heaven descend.

(ROGER.)

Ne'er from this queenly bright array
The crown of beauty fades,
Departing to the realms of day

Each to the next as good and fair
 Extends the zone of feminine grace,
 And veil of purity.

O happy race !

What vision glads my raptured eye,
 Equal in Nature's blooming pride,
 I see the mother and the virgin bride.

BEATRICE.

(Awaking from her reverie.)

O luckless hour !

Alas ! ill-fated maid !

Where shall I fly

From these rude warlike men ?

Lost and betrayed !

A shudder o'er me came,

When of this race accurst—the brothers twain—
 Their hands embrued with kindred gore,

I heard the dreaded name ;

Oft told their strife and serpent hate ;

With terror thrilled my bosom's core,

And now—oh hapless fate !—

I tremble, mid the rage of discord thrown,

Deserted and alone !

[She runs into the alcove.]

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Son of the immortal Deities,
 And blest is he, the Lord of power,
 His every joy the world can give ;
 Of all that mortals prize
 He culls the flower.

(ROGER.)

For him from Ocean's azure caves
 The diver bears each pearl of purest ray ;—
 Whate'er from Nature's boundless field,
 Or toil or art has won,
 Obsequious at his feet we lay ;
 His choice is ever free,
 We bow to chance, and Fortune's blind decree.

(BOHEMUND.)

But this of Prince's lot I deem,
 The crowning treasure, joy supreme—
 Of love the triumph and the prize,
 The beauty, star of neighbouring eyes !
 She blooms for him alone,
 He calls the chief of maids his own.

(ROGER.)

Armed for the deadly fray
 The corsair bounds upon the shore,

And drags, amid the gloom of night, away
 The shrieking captive train,
 Of wild desires the hapless prey :
 But ne'er his lawless hands profane
 The gem—the peerless flower—
 Whose charms shall deck the Sultan's bower.

(BOHEMUND.)

But haste and watch with curious eye
 These hallowed precincts round,
 That no presumptuous foot ^{come nigh} ~~may tread~~
 The secret solitary ground :
 Guard well the maiden fair,
 Your chieftain's brightest jewel owns your care.
 [*The Chorus withdraws to the background.*]

(*The scene changes to a chamber in the interior of the palace. DONNA ISABELLA between DON MANUEL and DON CÆSAR.*)

ISABELLA.

The long expected festal day is come,
 My children's hearts are twined in one, as thus
 I fold their hands ;—oh blissful hour ! when first
 A mother dares to speak in nature's voice,
 And no rude presence checks the tide of love ;
 The clang of arms affrights mine ear no more ;

And as the owls, ill-omened brood of night,
 From some old shattered homestead's ruined walls,
 Their ancient reign, fly forth a dusky swarm,
 Darkening the cheerful day ;—when absent long
 The dwellers home return with joyous shouts
 To build the pile anew ;—so Hate departs
 With all his grisly train ; pale Envy, scowling Malice,
 And hollow-eyed Suspicion, from our gates
 Hoarse murmuring to the realms of night ; while Peace,
 By Concord and fair Friendship led along,
 Comes smiling in his place.

(She pauses.)

But not alone
 This day of joy to each restores a brother ;
 It brings a sister ! Wonderstruck you gaze
 But now, my sons, of my long treasured secret
 I lift the envious veil—I have a daughter !
 For you a sister lives—this very day
 Shall give her to your arms.

DON CÆSAR.

We have a sister !
 What hast thou said, my mother ?—never told
 Her being till this hour !

DON MANUEL.

In childhood's years
 Oft of a sister we have heard, untimely

Snatched in her cradle by remorseless death ;
So ran the tale.

ISABELLA.

She lives !

DON CÆSAR.

And thou wert silent !

ISABELLA.

Hear how the seed was sown in early time,
That now shall ripen to a joyful harvest.
Ye bloomed as yet in boyhood's tender age,
E'en then by mutual deadly hate, the spring
Of anguish to a mother's heart, dissevered—
Oh may your strife return no more !—a vision
Strange and mysterious in your father's breast
Woke dire presage : it seemed that from his couch
With branches intertwined two laurels grew,
And in the midst a lily all in flames,
That catching swift the boughs and knotted stem
Burst forth with crackling rage, and o'er the house
Spread in one mighty sea of fire : perplexed
By this terrific dream, my husband sought
An Arab, skilled to read the stars, and long
The trusted oracle, whose counsels swayed
His inmost purpose : thus the boding Sage
Spoke Fate's decrees ;—if I a daughter bore,

Destruction to his sons and all his race [child
 From her should spring. Soon, by Heaven's will, this
 Of dreadful omen saw the light—your sire
 Commanded instant in the waves to throw
 The new-born innocent—a mother's love
 Prevailed—and aided by a faithful servant
 I snatched the babe from death.

DON CÆSAR.

Blest be the hands
 The ministers of thy care ! O ever rich
 Of counsels was a parent's love !

ISABELLA.

But more
 Than Nature's mighty voice ;—a warning dream
 Impelled to save my child : while yet unborn
 She slumbered in my womb, sleeping I saw
 An infant, fair as of celestial kind,
 That played upon the grass ; soon from the wood
 A lion rushed, and from his gory jaws,
 Caressing, in the infant's lap let fall
 His prey, new caught ; then thro' the air down swept
 An eagle, and with fond caress alike
 Dropt from his claws a trembling kid—and both
 Cowered at the infant's feet, a gentle pair.

A Monk, the saintly guide whose counsels poured
 In every earthly need the balm of Heaven
 Upon my troubled soul, my dream resolved :—
 Thus spoke the man of God—a daughter sent
 To knit the warring spirits of my sons
 In bonds of tender love, should recompense
 A mother's pains ! Deep in my heart I treasured
 His words, and reckless of the Pagan Seer
 Preserved the blessed child—ordained of Heaven
 To still your growing strife ; sweet pledge of hope
 And messenger of peace !

DON' MANUEL.

(Embracing his brother.)

There needs no sister
 To join our hearts—she shall but bind them closer.

ISABELLA.

In a lone spot obscure, by stranger hands
 Nurtured, the secret flower has grown—to me
 Denied a mother's joy :—ne'er have I fixed
 On her loved form my ardent gaze ; her sire
 To jealousy's corroding fires a prey,
 And brooding dark suspicion, restless tracked
 Each hour my steps.

DON CÆSAR.

Yet three months flown, my father
 Sleeps in the tranquil grave ; say, whence delayed
 The joyous tidings—why thus long concealed
 The maid, nor earlier taught our hearts to glow
 With brother's love ?

ISABELLA.

The cause your phrenzied hate,—
 That raging unconfined, e'en on the tomb
 Of your scarce buried father, lit the flames
 Of mortal strife. What ! could I throw my daughter
 Betwixt your gleaming blades ? or mid the storm
 Of passion would you list a mother's voice ?
 Could she, sweet pledge of peace, of all our hopes
 The last and holy anchor, mid the rage
 Of discord find a home ? ye stand as brothers,
 So will I give a sister to your arms !
 The reconciling angel comes—each hour
 I wait my messenger's return ; he leads her
 From her sequestered cell, to glad again
 A mother's eye.

DON MANUEL.

Nor her alone this day
 Thy arms shall fold :—Joy pours thro' all our gates ;

Soon shall the desolate halls be full, the seat
 Of every blooming Grace.—Now hear my secret :
 A sister thou hast given ; to thee I bring
 A daughter ;—bless thy son ; my heart has found
 Its lasting shrine ; e'er this day's sun has set
 Don Manuel to thy feet shall lead his bride,
 The partner of his days.

ISABELLA.

And to my breast
 With transport will I clasp the chosen maid,
 That makes my first-born happy ! joy shall spring
 Where'er she treads, and every flower that blooms
 Around the path of life smile in her presence !
 May bliss reward the son, that for my brows
 Has twined the choicest wreath a mother wears.

DON CÆSAR.

Yet give not all the fulness of thy blessing
 To him thy eldest born ;—if love be blest,
 I bring a daughter too, that in my soul
 Has waked the rapturous flame ; e'er this day's sun
 Declines, Don Cæsar's bride shall call thee mother.

DON MANUEL.

Almighty Love !—thou godlike power—for well
 We call thee Sovereign of the breast ! thy sway

The veil that hides my bliss ; another day
 Shall tell thee all. Enough—Don Manuel's bride
 Is worthy of thy son and thee.

ISABELLA.

Thy sire
 Speaks in thy words ; thus to himself retired
 For ever would he brood o'er counsels dark,
 And cloak his secret purpose ;—your delay
 Be short, my son. [Turning to Don Cæsar.

But thou—some royal maid,
 Daughter of kings, has stirred thy soul to love ;
 So speak—her name—

DON CÆSAR.

I have no art to veil
 My thoughts with mystery's garb—my spirit free
 And open as my brows ; what thou wouldst know
 My bosom ne'er has asked. What lights above
 Heaven's flaming orb ? Himself ! on all the world
 He shines, and with his beaming glory tells
 From light he sprung :—in her pure eyes I gazed,
 I looked into her heart of hearts ;—the brightness
 Bespoke the pearl ;—but for her name, my mother,
 I know it not !

ISABELLA.

My son, explain thy words,

For like some voice divine, the sudden charm
 Has thrall'd thy soul : to deeds of rash emprise
 Thy nature prompted, not to fantasies
 Of boyish love. Say, what has sway'd thy choice ?

DON CÆSAR.

My choice ? my mother ! is it choice when man
 Obeys the might of Destiny, that brings
 The awful hour !—I sought no beauteous bride,
 No fond delusion stirred my tranquil breast,
 Still as the house of Death, for there unsought
 I found the treasure of my soul. Thou know'st
 That heedless ever of the giddy race,
 I looked on beauty's charms with cold disdain,
 Nor deemed of womankind there lived another
 Like thee,—whom my idolatrous fancy decked
 With heavenly graces :

'Twas the solemn rite
 Of my dead father's obsequies ; we stood
 Amid the countless throng, with strange attire
 Hid from each other's glance ; for thus ordained
 Thy thoughtful care, lest with outbursting rage,
 E'en by the holy place unawed, our strife
 Should mar the funeral pomp.

With sable gauze
 The nave was all o'erhung, the altar round

Stood twenty giant Saints, uplifting each
 A torch, and in the midst reposed on high
 The coffin, with o'erspreading pall, that shewed,
 In white, Redemption's sign ;—thereon were laid
 The staff of sovereignty, the princely crown,
 The golden spurs of knighthood, and the sword
 With diamond-studded belt :—

And all was hushed

In silent prayer, when from the lofty choir,
 Unseen the pealing organ spoke, and loud
 From hundred voices burst the choral strain !
 Then mid the tide of song, the coffin sank
 With the descending floor beneath, for ever
 Down to the world below :—but wide outspread
 Above the yawning grave, the pall upheld
 The gauds of earthly state, nor with the corse
 To darkness fell ; yet on the Seraph wings
 Of Harmony, the enfranchised Spirit soared
 To Heaven and Mercy's throne :

Thus to thy thought,

My mother, I have waked the scene anew,
 And say, if aught of passion in my breast
 Profaned the solemn hour ; yet then the beams
 Of mighty Love—so willed my guiding star—
 First lit my soul ; but how it chanced, myself
 I ask in vain.

ISABELLA.

I would hear all ; so end

Thy tale.

DON CÆSAR.

What brought her to my side, or whence
 She came, I know not :—from her presence quick
 Some secret all-pervading inward charm
 Awoke ; 'twas not the magic of a smile,
 Nor playful Cupid in her cheeks, nor more,
 The form of peerless grace ;—'twas Beauty's soul,
 The speaking virtue, modesty inborn,
 That as with magic spells, impalpable
 To sense, my being thrall'd. We breathed together
 The air of Heaven—enough—no utterance asked
 Of words, our spiritual converse—in my heart
 Tho' strange, yet with familiar ties inwrought
 She seemed, and instant spake the thought—'Tis she !
 Or none that lives !

DON MANUEL.

(Interposing with eagerness.)

That is the sacred fire
 From heaven—the spark of love, that on the soul
 Bursts like the lightning's flash, and mounts in flame,

When kindred bosoms meet ! no choice remains.
Who shall resist ? what mortal break the band
That Heaven has knit ? My brother ! in thy tale
My fortune shows—I praise thee : well thou lift'st
The veil that shadows yet my secret love.

ISABELLA.

Thus Destiny has marked the wayward course
Of my two sons : the mighty torrent sweeps
Down from the precipice ; with rage he wears
His proper bed, nor heeds the channel traced
By art and prudent care. So to the powers
That darkly sway the fortunes of our house
Trembling I yield. One pledge of hope remains ;
Great as their birth—their noble souls.

ISABELLA, DON MANUEL, DON CÆSAR.

(DIEGO *is seen at the door.*)

ISABELLA.

But see,
My faithful messenger returns. Come near me,
Honest Diego. Quick ! where is she ? tell me
Where is my child ? There is no secret here.

Oh, speak ! no longer from my eyes conceal her ;
Come ! we are ready for the height of joy.

(She is about to lead him towards the door.)

What means this pause ?—thou lingerest—thou art
dumb—

Thy looks are terror-fraught—a shudder creeps
Through all my frame—declare thy tidings !—speak !
Where is she ? where is Beatrice ?

(She is about to rush from the chamber.)

DON MANUEL *(to himself abstractedly)*.

Beatrice !

DIEGO *(holding back the Princess)*.

Be still !

ISABELLA.

Where is she ? Anguish tears my breast !

DIEGO.

She comes not ;

I bring no daughter to thy arms.

ISABELLA.

Declare

Thy message ! Speak ! by all the Saints !
What has befallen ?

DON MANUEL.

Where is my sister ? Tell us,
Thou harbinger of ill !

DIEGO.

The maid is stolen
By corsairs ! lost ! Oh ! that I ne'er had seen
This day of woe !

DON MANUEL.

Compose thyself, my mother !

DON CÆSAR.

Be calm ; list all his tale.

DIEGO.

At thy command
I sought in haste the well-known path that leads
To the old sanctuary :—Joy winged my footsteps ;
The journey was my last !

DON CÆSAR.

Be brief !

DON MANUEL.

Proceed !

DIEGO.

Soon as I trode the convent's court, impatient,
I ask—Where is thy daughter ? Terror sate

In every eye ; and straight, with horror mute,
I hear the worst.

(ISABELLA *sinks, pale and trembling, upon a chair ;*
DON MANUEL *is busied about her.*)

DON CÆSAR.

Say'st thou by pirates stolen ?
Who saw the band ?—what tongue relates the spoil ?

DIEGO.

Not far a Moorish galley was descried,
At anchor in the bay—

DON CÆSAR.

The refuge oft
From tempests' rage ; where is the bark ?

DIEGO.

At dawn,
With favoring breeze she stood to sea.

DON CÆSAR.

But never
One prey contents the Moor ; say, have they told
Of other spoil ?

DIEGO.

A herd that pastured near
Was dragged away.

DON CÆSAR.

Yet from the cloister's bound
How tear the maid unseen ?

DIEGO.

They scaled, with ladders,
The garden's wall.

DON CÆSAR.

Thou know'st what jealous care
Enshrines the bride of Heaven ; scarce could their steps
Invade the convent cells.

DIEGO.

Bound by no vows,
The maiden roved at will ; oft would she seek
The garden's tranquil shade. Alas ! this day
Ne'er to return !

DON CÆSAR.

Say'st thou, the corsairs' prey ?
Yet free to rove, perchance unforced she left
Her cloistered home.

ISABELLA (*rising suddenly*).

'Twas force ! 'twas savage spoil !
Ne'er has my child, reckless of honor's ties,
With vile seducer fled ! My sons ! awake !

I thought to give a sister to your arms ;
 I ask a daughter from your swords ! Arise !
 Avenge this wrong ! to arms ! launch every ship !
 Scour all our coasts ! from sea to sea pursue them !
 O bring my daughter—haste !

DON CÆSAR.

Farewell—I fly

To vengeance !

[*He goes away.*]

(DON MANUEL *arouses himself from a state of abstraction, and turns with an air of agitation to* DIEGO.)

DON MANUEL.

Speak ! within the cloister's walls

When first unseen—

DIEGO.

This day at dawn.

DON MANUEL (*to Isabella*).

Her name

Thou say'st, is Beatrice ?

ISABELLA.

No questions ! fly !

DON MANUEL.

Yet tell me—

ISABELLA.

Haste ! begone ! why this delay ?—
Follow thy brother.

DON MANUEL.

I conjure thee—speak—

ISABELLA (*dragging him away*).

Behold my tears !

DON MANUEL.

Where was she hid, what region
Concealed my sister ?

ISABELLA.

Scarce from curious eyes,
In the deep bosom of the earth more safe
My child had been !

DIEGO.

Oh ! now a sudden horror
Starts in my breast.

DON MANUEL.

What gives thee fear ?

DIEGO.

'Twas I

That guiltless caused this woe !

ISABELLA.

Unhappy man !

What hast thou done ?

DIEGO.

To spare thy mother's heart
 One anxious pang, my mistress, I concealed
 What now my lips shall tell :—'Twas on the day
 When thy dead husband in the silent tomb
 Was laid ; from every side the unnumbered throng
 Pressed eager to the solemn rites ; thy daughter—
 For e'en amid the cloistered shade was noised
 The funeral pomp—urged me with ceaseless prayers
 To lead her to the festival of Death.
 In evil hour I gave consent ; and shrouded
 In sable weeds of mourning, she surveyed
 Her father's obsequies. With keen reproach
 My bosom tells—for thro' the envious veil
 Her charms resistless shone ; 'twas there she lured
 The spoiler's eye.

DON MANUEL (*to himself*).

Thrice happy words ! I live !

It was another !

ISABELLA (*to Diego*).

Faithless ! ill betide

Thy treacherous age !

DIEGO.

O never have I strayed
From duty's path ! My mistress, in her prayer
I heard the voice of Nature ;—thus from Heaven
Ordained, methought, the secret impulse sways,
Of kindred blood, to dew with holy tears
A father's grave : the tender office owned
Thy servant's care, and thus with good intent
I wrought but ill.

DON MANUEL (*to himself.*)

Why stand I thus, a prey
To torturing fears ! No longer will I bear
The dread suspense—I will know all !

DON CÆSAR (*who returns.*)

Forgive me,
I follow thee.

DON MANUEL.

Away ! let no man follow ! [*Exit.*

DON CÆSAR.

(*Looking after him in surprise.*)

What means my brother ? speak—

ISABELLA.

In wonder lost
I gaze ; some mystery lurks—

DON CÆSAR.

Thou mark'st, my mother,
 My quick return ; with eager zeal I flew
 At thy command, nor asked one trace to guide
 My footsteps to thy daughter. Whence was torn
 Thy treasure ? say, what cloistered solitude
 Enshrined the beauteous maid ?

ISABELLA.

'Tis consecrate
 To St. Cecilia ; deep in forest shades,
 Beyond the woody ridge that slowly climbs
 Towards Etna's towering throne, it seems a refuge
 Of parted souls.

DON CÆSAR.

Have courage, trust thy sons ;
 She shall be thine, tho' with unwearied quest
 O'er every land and sea I track her presence
 To earth's extremest bounds : one thought alone
 Disturbs,—in stranger hands my timorous bride
 Waits my return ; to thy protecting arms
 I give the pledge of all my joy ! She comes ;
 Soon on her faithful bosom thou shalt rest,
 In sweet oblivion of thy cares.

[*Exit.*

ISABELLA.

When will the ancient curse be stilled, that weighs
 Upon our house? some mocking demon sports
 With every new-formed hope, nor envious leaves
 One hour of joy. So near the haven smiled—
 So smooth the treacherous main—secure I deemed
 My happiness: the storm was lulled, and bright
 In evening's lustre gleamed the sunny shore;
 Then thro' the placid air the tempest sweeps,
 And bears me to the roaring surge again!

[*She goes into the interior of the palace, followed
 by DIEGO.*

(The scene changes to the garden.)

Both Choruses, afterwards BEATRICE.

(The Chorus of DON MANUEL enters in solemn procession, adorned with garlands, and bearing the bridal ornaments above-mentioned. The Chorus of DON CÆSAR opposes their entrance.)

First Chorus (CAJETAN).

Begone!

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Not at thy bidding!

CAJETAN.

See'st thou not

Thy presence irks ?

BOHEMUND.

The longer I remain !

CAJETAN.

My place is here !—what arm repels me ?

BOHEMUND.

Mine !

CAJETAN.

Don Manuel sent me hither.

BOHEMUND.

I obey

My Lord, Don Cæsar.

CAJETAN.

To the eldest born

Thy master reverence owes.

BOHEMUND.

The world belongs

To him that wins !

CAJETAN.

Unmannered knave, give place !

BOHEMUND.

Our swords be measured first !

CAJETAN.

I find thee ever

A serpent in my path.

BOHEMUND.

Where'er I list,

Thus will I meet thee !

CAJETAN.

Say, why cam'st thou hither

To spy—— ?

BOHEMUND.

And thou to question and command ?

CAJETAN.

To parley I disdain !

BOHEMUND.

Too much I grace thee

By words !

CAJETAN.

Thy hot impetuous youth should bow

To reverend age.

BOHEMUND.

Elder thou art—not braver.

BEATRICE.

(Rushing from her place of concealment.)

Alas! what mean these warlike men ?

CAJETAN (*to* BOHEMUND).

I heed not
Thy threats and lofty mien.

BOHEMUND.

I serve a master
Better than thine.

BEATRICE.

Alas ! should he appear !

CAJETAN.

Thou liest ! Don Manuel thousandfold excels.

BOHEMUND.

In every strife the wreath of victory decks
Don Cæsar's brows !

BEATRICE.

Now he will come ! already
The hour is past !

CAJETAN.

'Tis peace, or thou shouldst know
My vengeance !

BOHEMUND.

Fear, not peace, thy arm refrains.

BEATRICE.

Oh ! were he thousand miles remote !

CAJETAN.

Thy looks

But move my scorn ; the compact I obey.

BOHEMUND.

The coward's ready shield !

CAJETAN.

Come on ! I follow.

BOHEMUND.

To arms !

BEATRICE (*in the greatest agitation*).

Their falchions gleam—the strife begins !

Ye Heavenly Powers, his steps refrain ! some snare

Throw round his feet, that in this hour of dread

He come not : all ye Angels, late implored

To give him to my arms, reverse my prayers ;

Far, far from hence convey the loved one !

[*She runs into the alcove. At the moment when the two Choruses are about to engage, DON MANUEL appears.*

 DON MANUEL. *The Chorus.*

DON MANUEL.

Hold !

What do I see !

First Chorus to the Second.

(CAJETAN, BERENGAR, MANFRED.)

Come on ! Come on !

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND, ROGER, HIPPOLYTE).

Down with them !

DON MANUEL.

(*Stepping between them with drawn sword.*)

Hold !

CAJETAN.

'Tis the Prince !

BOHEMUND.

Be still !

DON MANUEL.

I stretch him dead

Upon this verdant turf, that with one glance

Of scorn prolongs the strife, or threats his foe !

Why rage ye thus ? What maddening fiend impels

To blow the flames of ancient hate anew,

For ever reconciled. Say, who began

The conflict ?—Speak—

First Chorus (CAJETAN, BERENGAR).

My Prince, we stood—

Second Chorus (ROGER, BOHEMUND).

(*Interrupting them.*)

They came—

DON MANUEL (*to the First Chorus*).

Speak thou!

First Chorus (CAJETAN).

With wreaths adorned, in festal train
 We bore the bridal gifts; no thought of ill
 Disturbed our peaceful way; composed for ever
 With holy pledge of love we deemed your strife,
 And trusting came; when here in rude array
 Of arms encamped they stood, and loud defied us!

DON MANUEL.

Slave! is no refuge safe? shall Discord thus
 Profane the bower of virgin innocence,
 The home of sanctity and peace?

(*To the Second Chorus.*)

Retire—

Your warlike presence ill beseems; away!

I would be private.

[*They hesitate.*]

In your Master's name

I give command; our souls are one, our lips

Declare each other's thoughts; begone!

(*To the First Chorus.*)

Remain

And guard the entrance.

BOHEMUND.

So! what next? our masters

Are reconciled ; that's plain ; and less he wins
 Of thanks than peril, that with busy zeal
 In princely quarrel stirs ; for when of strife
 His Mightiness aweary feels, of Guilt
 He throws the red-dyed mantle unconcerned
 On his poor follower's luckless head, and stands
 Arrayed in Virtue's robes ! so let them end
 E'en as they will their brawls, I hold it best
 That we obey.

[Exit Second Chorus. The First withdraws to the back of the stage ; at the same moment Beatrice rushes forward and throws herself into Don Manuel's arms.]

BEATRICE.

'Tis thou ! Ah ! cruel one,
 Again I see thee—clasp thee—long appalled,
 To thousand ills a prey, trembling I languish
 For thy return : no more—in thy loved arms
 I am at peace, nor think of dangers past,
 Thy breast my shield from every threatening harm.
 Quick ! let us fly ! they see us not—away !
 Nor lose the moment.

Ha ! thy looks affright me !
 Thy sullen cold reserve ! thou tear'st thyself
 Impatient from my circling arms, I know thee

No more ! Is this Don Manuel ? my beloved ?
My husband ?

DON MANUEL.

Beatrice !

BEATRICE.

No words ! the moment

Is precious ! haste.

DON MANUEL.

Yet tell me—

BEATRICE.

Quick ! away

Ere those fierce men return.

DON MANUEL.

Be calm, for nought

Shall trouble thee of ill.

BEATRICE.

Oh fly !—alas,

Thou know'st them not !

DON MANUEL.

Protected by this arm

Canst thou fear aught ?

BEATRICE.

Oh ! trust me ; mighty men

Are here.

DON MANUEL.

Beloved ! mightier none than me !

BEATRICE.

And wouldst thou brave this warlike host alone ?

DON MANUEL.

Alone ! the men thou fear'st—

BEATRICE.

Thou know'st them not,

Nor whom they serve.

DON MANUEL.

Myself ! I am their Lord !

BEATRICE.

Thou art—a shudder creeps thro' all my frame !

DON MANUEL.

Far other than I seemed ; so learn at last
To know me, Beatrice. Not the poor knight
Am I, the stranger and unknown, that loving
Taught thee to love ; but what I am—my race—
My power—

BEATRICE.

And art thou not Don Manuel ? speak—
Who art thou ?

DON MANUEL.

Chief of all that bear the name,
I am Don Manuel, Prince of Messina !

BEATRICE.

Art thou Don Manuel, Don Cæsar's brother ?

DON MANUEL.

Don Cæsar is my brother.

BEATRICE.

Is thy brother !

DON MANUEL.

What means this terror ? know'st thou then Don Cæsar ?
None other of my race ?

BEATRICE.

Art thou Don Manuel,
That with thy brother liv'st in bitter strife
Of long inveterate hate ?

DON MANUEL.

This very sun
Smiled on our glad accord ! yes, we are brothers !
Brothers in heart !

BEATRICE.

And reconciled ? this day ?

DON MANUEL.

What stirs this wild disorder? hast thou known
Aught but our name? say, hast thou told me all?
Is there no secret? hast thou nought concealed?
Nothing disguised?

BEATRICE.

Thy words are dark; explain,
What shall I tell thee?

DON MANUEL.

Of thy mother nought
Hast thou e'er told; who is she? if in words
I paint her, bring her to thy sight—

BEATRICE.

Thou know'st her!
And thou wert silent!

DON MANUEL.

If I know thy mother,
Horrors betide us both!

BEATRICE.

Oh! she is gracious
As the sun's orient beam! yes! I behold her,
Fond memory wakes, and from my bosom's depths
Her godlike presence rises to my view!

I see around her snowy neck descend
 The ringlets of her auburn hair, that shade
 The form of sculptured loveliness ; I see
 The pure high-thoughted brow, the darkening glance
 Of her large lustrous orbs ; I hear the tones
 Of soul-fraught sweetness !

DON MANUEL.

'Tis herself !

BEATRICE.

This day

Perchance had given me to her arms, and knit
 Our souls in everlasting love ;—such bliss
 I have renounced, yes ! I have lost a mother
 For thee !

DON MANUEL.

Console thyself, Messina's Princess
 Henceforth shall call thee daughter ; to her feet
 I lead thee ; come—she waits.

BEATRICE.

What hast thou said ?

Thy mother and Don Cæsar's ? never ! never !

DON MANUEL.

Thou shudderest ! whence this horror ? hast thou known
 My mother ? speak—

BEATRICE.

O grief ! O dire misfortune !

Alas ! that e'er I live to see this day !

DON MANUEL.

What troubles thee ? thou know'st me ; thou hast found
In the poor stranger knight Messina's Prince.

BEATRICE.

Give me the dear unknown again ! with him
On Earth's remotest wilds I could be blest !

DON CÆSAR (*behind the scene*).

Away ! what rabble throng is here ?

BEATRICE.

That voice !

Oh heavens ! where shall I fly !

DON MANUEL.

Know'st thou that voice ?

No, thou hast never heard it ; to thine ear

'Tis strange—

BEATRICE.

Oh come—delay not—

DON MANUEL.

Wherefore fly ?

It is my brother's voice ! he seeks me—how
He tracked my steps—

BEATRICE.

By all the holy Saints !
Brave not his wrath ! oh quit this place—avoid him—
Meet not thy brother here !

DON MANUEL.

My soul ! thy fears
Confound ; thou hear'st me not ; our strife is o'er ;
Yes ! we are reconciled.

BEATRICE.

Protect me Heaven,
In this dread hour !

DON MANUEL.

A sudden dire presage
Starts in my breast—I shudder at the thought ;
If it were true ! oh horror ! could she know
That voice ! Wert thou—my tongue denies to utter
The words of fearful import—Beatrice !
Say wert thou present at the funeral rites
Of my dead sire ?

BEATRICE.

Alas !

DON MANUEL.

Thou wert !

BEATRICE.

Forgive me !

DON MANUEL.

Unhappy woman—

BEATRICE.

I was present !

DON MANUEL.

Horror !

BEATRICE.

Some mighty impulse urged me to the scene—
 Oh be not angry—to thyself I owned
 The ardent fond desire ; with darkening brow
 Thou listenedst to my prayer, and I was silent.
 But what misguiding inauspicious star
 Allured, I know not ; from my inmost soul
 The wish, the dear emotion spoke, and vain
 Aught else !—Diego gave consent—oh pardon me,
 I disobeyed thee.

*[She advances towards him imploringly ; at the same
 moment DON CÆSAR enters, accompanied by the
 whole Chorus.]*

BOTH BROTHERS. BOTH CHORUSES. BEATRICE.

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND) to DON CÆSAR.

Thou believ'st us not—

Believe thine eyes !

DON CÆSAR

(Rushes forward furiously, and at the sight of his brother starts back with horror).

Some hell-born magic cheats
My senses ; in her arms ! envenomed snake !
Is this thy love ? for this thy treacherous heart
Could lure with guise of friendship ! O from Heaven
Breathed my immortal hate ! down, down to Hell,
Thou soul of falsehood !

[He stabs him, DON MANUEL falls.

DON MANUEL.

Beatrice !—my brother !—

I die !

[Dies. BEATRICE sinks lifeless at his side.

First Chorus (CAJETAN).

Help ! help ! to arms ! avenge with blood
The bloody deed !

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND.)

The fortune of the day

Is ours ! the strife for ever stilled :—Messina
Obeys one Lord.

First Chorus (CAJETAN, BERENGAR, MANFRED).

Revenge ! the murderer
Shall die ! quick offer to your master's shade
Appeasing sacrifice !

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND, ROGER, HIPPOLYTE).

My Prince ! fear nothing,
Thy friends are true.

DON CÆSAR

(Steps between them, looking around).

Be still ! the foe is slain
That practised on my trusting honest heart
With snares of brother's love ! O direful shows
The deed of death ! but righteous Heaven hath judged.

First Chorus (CAJETAN).

Alas to thee Messina ! woe for ever !
Sad city ! from thy blood-stained walls this deed
Of nameless horror taints the skies : ill fare
Thy mothers and thy children, youth and age,
And offspring yet unborn !

DON CÆSAR.

Too late your grief—

Here give your help. [Pointing to BEATRICE.

Call her to life, and quick

Depart this scene of terror and of death.

I must away and seek my sister :—Hence !

Conduct her to my mother—

And tell her that her son Don Cæsar sends her !

[Exit.

(The senseless BEATRICE is placed on a litter and carried away by the Second Chorus. The First Chorus remains with the body, round which the boys who bear the bridal presents range themselves in a semicircle.)

Chorus (CAJETAN).

List how with dreaded mystery

Was signed to my prophetic soul,

Of kindred blood the dire decree :—

Hither with noiseless giant stride

I saw the hideous Fiend of terror glide !

'Tis past—I strive not to control

My shuddering awe—so swift of ill

The Fates the warning sign fulfil.

Lo ! to my sense dismayed

Sudden the deed of death has shown,

Whate'er my boding fears portrayed :—

The visioned thought was pain ;

The present horror curdles every vein !

One of the Chorus (MANFRED).

Sound, sound the plaint of woe !
 Beautiful Youth !
 Outstretched and pale he lies,
 Untimely cropped in early bloom ;
 The heavy night of death has sealed his eyes.
 In this glad hour of nuptial joy,
 Snatched by relentless doom,
 He sleeps—while, echoing to the sky,
 Of sorrow bursts the loud despairing cry.

A second (CAJETAN).

We come, we come, in festal pride,
 To greet the beauteous Bride ;
 Behold ! the nuptial gifts, the rich attire :
 The banquet waits, the guests are there ;
 They bid thee to the solemn rite
 Of Hymen quick repair.
 Thou hearst them not—the sportive lyre,
 The frolic dance, shall ne'er invite,
 Nor wake thee from thy lowly bed,
 For deep the slumber of the dead.

The whole Chorus.

No more the echoing horn shall cheer,
 Nor bride with tones of sweetness charm his ear ;

On the cold earth he lies,
In death's eternal slumber closed his eyes.

A third (CAJETAN).

What are the hopes, and fond desires
Of mortals' transitory race?
This day, with harmony of voice and soul,
Ye woke the long-extinguished fires
Of brothers' love—yon flaming orb
With smiles beheld your dear embrace:
At eve, upon the gory sand
Thou liest—a reeking corpse!
Stretched by a brother's murderous hand.
Vain projects, treacherous hopes,
Child of the fleeting hour are thine;
Fond man! thou rear'st on dust each bold design.

Chorus (BERENGAR).

To thy mother I will bear
The burden of unutterable woe!
Quick shall yon cypress, blooming fair,
Bend to the axe's murderous blow.
Then twine the mournful bier,
For ne'er with verdant life the tree shall smile
That grew on Death's devoted soil;
Ne'er in the breeze the branches play,
Nor shade the wanderer in the noontide ray;

'Twas marked to bear the fruits of doom,
Cursed to the service of the tomb.

First (CAJETAN).

Woe to the murderer ! woe !
That sped exulting in his pride,
Behold ! the parched earth drinks the crimson tide ;
Down, down it flows unceasingly,
To the dim caverned halls below,
Where throned in kindred gloom the sisters twain,
Of Themis progeny severe,
Brood in their songless silent reign.
Stern ministers of Wrath's decree,
They catch in swarthy cups thy streaming gore,
And pledge with horrid rites for vengeance evermore.

Second (BERENGAR).

Tho' swift of deeds the traces fade
From earth, before the enlivening ray,
As o'er the brow the transient shade
Of thought, the hues of fancy flit away ;
Yet in the mystic womb unseen,
Of the dark ruling Hours that sway
Our mortal lot, whate'er *has been*,
With new creative germ defies decay.

The blooming field is Time,
For Nature's ever-teeming shoot,
And all is seed and all is fruit.

[*The Chorus goes away, bearing the corpse of DON
MANUEL on a bier.*

SCENE.—*The Hall of Pillars. It is night.*

(*The stage is lighted from above by a single large lamp.*)

DONNA ISABELLA and DIEGO advance to the front.

ISABELLA.

As yet no tidings from my sons, no trace
Found of the lost one.

DIEGO.

Nothing have we heard,
My mistress ; yet with hot unwearied zeal
Thy sons pursue. Ere long, the rescued maid
Shall glad a mother's eye.

ISABELLA.

Alas ! Diego,
My heart is sad ; 'twas I that caused this woe !

DIEGO.

Vex not thy anxious bosom ; nought escaped
Thy thoughtful care.

ISABELLA.

Oh ! had I earlier shown
The hidden treasure !

DIEGO.

Prudent were thy counsels,
Wisely thou left'st her in retirement's shade ;
So, trust in Heaven.

ISABELLA.

Alas ! no joy is perfect,—
Without this chance of ill—my bliss were pure.

DIEGO.

Thy happiness is but delayed ; enjoy
The concord of thy sons.

ISABELLA.

The sight was rapture
Supreme—when locked in one another's arms
They glowed with brother's love.

DIEGO.

And in the heart

It burns ; for ne'er their princely souls have stooped
To mean disguise.

ISABELLA.

Now too their bosoms wake
To gentler thoughts, and own the softening sway
Of Love. No more their hot impetuous youth
Revels in Liberty untamed, and spurns
Restraint of Law—attempered Passion's self
With modest chaste reserve.

To thee, Diego,

I will unfold my secret heart ; this hour
Of feeling's opening bloom, expected long,
Wakes boding fears : thou knowst with sudden rage
Love stirs tumultuous breasts ;—and if this flame
With jealousy should rouse the slumbering fires
Of ancient hate ?—I shudder at the thought !
If these discordant souls perchance have thrilled
In fatal unison !—Enough—the clouds,
That black with thundering menace o'er me hung,
Are past ; some angel sped them tranquil by,
And my enfranchised spirit breathes again !

DIEGO.

Rejoice, my mistress, for thy gentle sense,
And soft prevailing art, more weal have wrought

Than all thy husband's power. Be praise to thee
And thy auspicious star !

ISABELLA.

Yes ! fortune smiled ;
Nor light the task, so long with apt disguise
To veil the cherished secret of my heart,
And cheat my ever-jealous lord : more hard
To stifle mighty Nature's pleading voice,
That, like a prisoned fire, for ever strove
To rend its confines.

DIEGO.

All shall end in joy.
Fortune, so long propitious to our hopes,
Gives pledge of brighter days.

ISABELLA.

I praise not yet
My natal star, while darkening o'er my fate
This mystery hangs : too well the dire mischance
Tells of the Fiend whose never slumbering rage
Pursues our house. Now list what I have done,
And praise or blame me as thou wilt ; from thee
My bosom guards no secret :—ill I brook
This dull repose, while swift o'er land and sea
My sons unwearied track their sister's flight,

Yes ! I have sought—Heaven counsels oft, when vain
All mortal aid.

DIEGO.

What I may know, my mistress,
Declare.

ISABELLA.

On Etna's solitary height
A reverend Hermit dwells ;—benamed of old,
The Mountain Seer ;—who to the realms of light
More near abiding than the toilsome race
Of mortals here below, with purer air
Hath cleansed each earthly grosser sense away ;
And from the lofty peak of gathered years,
As from his mountain home, with downward glance
Surveys the crooked paths of worldly strife.
To him are known the fortunes of our house ;
Oft has the holy Sage besought response
From Heaven, and many a curse with earnest prayer
Averted : thither at my bidding flew,
On wings of youthful speed, a messenger,
To ask some tidings of my child : each hour
I wait his homeward footsteps.

DIEGO.

If mine eyes

Deceive me not, he comes ; and well his zeal
Deserves thy praise.

MESSENGER. ISABELLA, DIEGO.

ISABELLA (*to* MESSENGER).

Now speak, and nothing hide
Of weal or woe ; be Truth upon thy lips !
What tidings bear'st thou from the mountain Seer ?

MESSENGER.

His answer, " Quick, retrace thy steps—the lost one
Is found."

ISABELLA.

Auspicious tongue ! celestial sounds
Of peace and joy ! thus ever to my vows,
Thrice honored Sage, thy kindly message spoke !
But say, which heaven-directed brother traced
My daughter ?

MESSENGER.

'Twas thy eldest born that found
The deep-secluded maid.

ISABELLA.

Is it Don Manuel
That gives her to my arms ? O he was ever

The child of blessing ! Tell me, hast thou borne
 My offering to the aged man ?—the tapers
 To burn before his Saint ? for gifts, the prize
 Of worldly hearts, the man of God disdains.

MESSENGER.

He took the torches from my hands in silence,
 And stepping to the altar—where the lamp
 Burned to his Saint—illumed them at its fire,
 And instant set in flames the hermit cell,
 Where he has honored God these ninety years !

ISABELLA.

What hast thou said ? what horrors fright my soul ?

MESSENGER.

And three times shrieking “ Woe ! ” with downward
 course
 He fled ; but silent with uplifted arm
 Beckoned me not to follow, nor regard him !
 So hither I have hastened, terror sped !

ISABELLA.

O, I am tossed amid the surge again
 Of doubt and anxious fears ; thy tale appals
 With ominous sounds of ill. My daughter found—
 Thou sayst ; and by my eldest born, Don Manuel ?

The tidings ne'er shall bless, that heralded
This deed of woe !

MESSENGER.

My Mistress ! look around,
Behold the hermit's message to thine eyes
Fulfilled. Some charm deludes my sense, or hither
Thy daughter comes, girt by the warlike train
Of thy two sons !

(BEATRICE is carried in by the Second Chorus on a litter, and placed in the front of the stage. She is still without perception, and motionless.)

ISABELLA. DIEGO. MESSENGER. BEATRICE.

Chorus (BOHEMUND, ROGER, HIPPOLYTE, and the other nine Followers of DON CÆSAR).

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Here at thy feet we lay
The maid, obedient to our Lord's command :
'Twas thus he spoke—" Conduct her to my mother,
And tell her that her son, Don Cæsar, sends her !"

ISABELLA

(Is advancing towards her with outstretched arms, and starts back in horror).

Heavens ! she is motionless and pale !

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

She lives,
 She will awake, but give her time to rouse
 From the dread shock that holds each sense enthralled.

ISABELLA.

My daughter! child of all my cares and pains!
 And is it thus I see thee once again?
 Thus thou returnest to thy father's halls!
 O let my breath relume thy vital spark;
 Yes! I will strain thee to a mother's arms,
 And hold thee fast—till from the frost of death
 Released, thy life-warm current throbs again.

(To the Chorus.)

Where hast thou found her?—speak! what dire mis-
 chance
 Has caused this sight of woe?

Chorus (BOHEMUND.)

My lips are dumb!
 Ask not of me: thy son will tell thee all—
 Don Cæsar—for 'tis he that sends her.

ISABELLA.

Tell me,
 Wouldst thou not say Don Manuel?

Chorus (BOHEMUND.)

'Tis Don Cæsar

That sends her to thee.

ISABELLA (*to the Messenger.*)

How declared the Seer?

Speak! was it not Don Manuel?

MESSENGER.

'Twas he!

Thy elder born.

ISABELLA.

Be blessings on his head

Whiche'er it be; to him I owe a daughter.

Alas! that in this blissful hour, so long

Expected, long implored, some envious Fiend

Should mar my joy! O I must stem the tide

Of Nature's transport! In her childhood's home

I see my daughter; me she knows not—heeds not—

Nor answers to a mother's voice of love!

Ope, ye dear eyelids—hands be warm—and heave

Thou lifeless bosom with responsive throbs

To mine! 'Tis she!—Diego, look! 'tis Beatrice!

The long-concealed—the lost—the rescued one!

Before the world I claim her for my own!

Chorus (BOHEMUND.)

New signs of terror to my boding soul
 Are pictured ;—in amazement lost I stand !
 What light shall pierce this gloom of mystery ?

ISABELLA.

*(To the Chorus, who exhibit marks of confusion and
 embarrassment.)*

O ye hard hearts ! ye rude un pitying men !
 A mother's transport from your breasts of steel
 Rebounds, as from the rocks the heaving surge !
 I look around your train, nor mark one glance
 Of soft regard. Where are my sons ? oh tell me
 Why come they not, and from their beaming eyes
 Speak comfort to my soul ? for here environed
 I stand, amid the desert's raging brood,
 Or monsters of the deep !

DIEGO.

She opes her eyes !
 She moves ! she lives !

ISABELLA.

She lives ? on me be thrown
 Her earliest glance !

DIEGO.

See ! they are closed again—

She shudders !

ISABELLA (*to the Chorus.*)

Quick ! retire—your aspect frights her.

[*Chorus steps back.*]

BOHEMUND.

Well pleased I shun her sight.

DIEGO.

With outstretched eyes

And wonderstruck, she seems to measure thee.

BEATRICE.

Not strange those lineaments? Where am I?

ISABELLA.

Slowly

Her sense returns.

DIEGO.

Behold ! upon her knees

She sinks.

BEATRICE.

O Angel visage of my mother !

ISABELLA.

Child of my heart !

BEATRICE.

See ! kneeling at thy feet

The guilty one !

ISABELLA.

I hold thee in my arms !

Enough—forgotten all !

DIEGO.

Look in my face,

Canst thou remember me ?

BEATRICE.

The reverend brows

Of honest old Diego !

ISABELLA.

Faithful guardian

Of thy young years.

BEATRICE.

And am I once again

With kindred ?

ISABELLA.

Nought but death shall part us more !

BEATRICE.

Will thou ne'er send me to the stranger ?

ISABELLA.

Never !

Fate is appeased.

BEATRICE.

And am I next thy heart ?

And was it all a dream—a hideous dream ?

My mother ! at my feet he fell !—I know not

What brought me hither—yet 'tis well.—O bliss !

That I am safe in thy protecting arms ;

They would have ta'en me to the Princess Mother—

Sooner to death !

ISABELLA.

My daughter, calm thy fears ;

Messina's princess—

BEATRICE.

Name her not again !

At that ill-omened sound the chill of death

Creeps thro' my trembling frame.

ISABELLA.

My child ! but hear me—

BEATRICE.

She has two sons, by mortal hate dissevered,
Don Manuel and Don Cæsar—

ISABELLA.

'Tis myself!

Behold thy mother!

BEATRICE.

Have I heard thee? speak!

ISABELLA.

I am thy mother, and Messina's Princess!

BEATRICE.

Art thou Don Manuel's and Don Cæsar's mother?

ISABELLA.

And thine! they are thy brethren whom thou nam'st.

BEATRICE.

O gleam of horrid light!

ISABELLA.

What troubles thee?

Say, whence this strange emotion?

BEATRICE.

Yes! 'twas they!

Now I remember all; no dream deceived me,
They met—'tis fearful truth! Unhappy men,
Where have ye hid him?

[She rushes towards the Chorus: they turn away from her. A funeral march is heard in the distance.]

Chorus.

Horror! horror!

ISABELLA.

Hid!

Speak—who is hid! and what is true? Ye stand
In silent dull amaze—as tho' ye fathomed
Her words of mystery!—In your faltering tones—
Your brows—I read of horrors yet unknown,
That would refrain my tongue! What is it? tell me!
I will know all! Why fix ye on the door
That awe-struck gaze!—what mournful music sounds?

[The March is heard nearer.]

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

It comes! it comes! and all shall be declared
With terrible voice. My Mistress! steel thy heart;

Be firm, and bear with courage what awaits thee,—
 For more than woman's soul thy destined griefs
 Demand.

ISABELLA.

What comes? and what awaits me? Hark!
 With fearful tones the death-wail smites mine ear,—
 It echoes thro' the house!—Where are my sons?

*[The first Semi-Chorus brings in the body of DON
 MANUEL on a bier, which is placed at the side of
 the Stage. A black pall is spread over it.]*

ISABELLA. BEATRICE. DIEGO.

Both Choruses.

First Chorus (CAJETAN).

With Sorrow in his train,
 From street to street the King of Terror glides;
 With stealthy foot, and slow,
 He creeps where'er the fleeting race
 Of man abides!
 In turn at every gate
 Is heard the dreaded knock of Fate,
 The message of unutterable woe.

BERENGAR.

When in the sere
 And Autumn leaves decayed,
 The mournful forest tells how quickly fade
 The glories of the year !
 When in the silent tomb opprest
 Frail man, with weight of days,
 Sinks to his tranquil rest ;
 Contented Nature but obeys
 Her everlasting law,—
 The general doom awakes no shuddering awe !
 But, mortals, oh ! prepare
 For mightier ills : with ruthless hand,
 Fell Murder cuts the holy band,—
 The kindred tie : insatiate Death,
 With unrelenting rage,
 Bears to his bark the flower of blooming Age.

CAJETAN.

When clouds athwart the lowering sky
 Are driven,—when bursts with hollow moan
 The thunder's peal,—our trembling bosoms own
 The might of awful Destiny !
 Yet oft the lightning's glare
 Darts sudden thro' the cloudless air ;

Then in thy short delusive day
 Of bliss, oh! dread the treacherous snare,
 Nor prize the fleeting goods and vain!
 The flowers that bloom but to decay:
 Nor Wealth, nor Joy, nor aught but Pain,
 Was e'er to mortal's lot secure:—
 Our first best lesson—to endure!

ISABELLA.

What shall I hear?—what horrors lurk beneath
 This funeral pall?

[She steps towards the bier, but suddenly pauses, and stands irresolute.]

Some strange mysterious dread
 Enthrals my sense. I would approach, and sudden
 The icecold grasp of terror holds me back!

[To BEATRICE, who has thrown herself between her and the bier.]

Whate'er it be, I will unveil—

[On raising the pall, she discovers the body of DON MANUEL.]

Eternal Powers! it is my son!

[She stands in mute horror. BEATRICE sinks to the ground with a shriek of anguish near the bier.]

Chorus.

Unhappy mother ! 'tis thy son. Thy lips
Have uttered what my faltering tongue denied !

ISABELLA.

My soul ! my Manuel ! O eternal grief !
And is it thus I see thee ? thus thy life
Has bought thy sister from the spoiler's rage ?
Where was thy brother ? Could no arm be found
To shield thee ?—O be curst the hand that dug
These gory wounds ? a curse on her that bore
The murderer of my son ! ten thousand curses
On all their race !

Chorus.

Woe ! Woe !

ISABELLA.

And is it thus
Ye keep your word, ye Gods ?—is this your truth ?
Alas ! for him that trusts with honest heart
Your soothing wiles. Why have I hoped and trembled ?
And this the issue of my prayers ! Attend,
Ye terror-stricken witnesses, that feed
Your gaze upon my anguish ; learn to know
How warning visions cheat, and boding seers

But mock our credulous hopes :—let none believe
The voice of Heaven !

When in my teeming womb
This daughter lay, her father in a dream
Saw from his nuptial couch two laurels grow,
And in the midst a lily all in flames,
That catching swift the boughs and knotted stems,
Burst forth with crackling rage, and o'er the house
Spread in one mighty sea of fire. Perplexed
By this terrific dream, my husband sought
The counsels of the mystic art, and thus
Pronounced the Sage,—“ If I a daughter bore,
The murderess of his sons, the destined spring
Of ruin to our house, the baleful child
Should see the light.”

Chorus (CAJETAN and BOHEMUND).

What hast thou said, my mistress ?
Woe ! Woe !

ISABELLA.

For this her ruthless father spoke
The dire behest of death. I rescued her,
The innocent, the doomed one :—from my arms
The babe was torn : to stay the curse of Heaven,
And save my sons, the mother gave her child ;

And now by robber hands her brother falls ;—
My child is guiltless ;—O, she slew him not !

(*Chorus.*)

Woe ! Woe !

ISABELLA.

No trust the fabling readers of the stars
Have e'er deserved ! Hear how another spoke
With comfort to my soul, and him I deemed
Inspired to voice the secrets of the skies !
“ My daughter should unite in love the hearts
Of my dissevered sons : ”—and thus their tales
Of curse and blessing on her head, proclaim
Each other's falsehood. No ! she ne'er has brought
A curse—the innocent ! nor time was given
The blessed promise to fulfil. Their tongues
Were false alike,—their boasted art is vain,—
With trick of words they cheat our credulous ears,
Or are themselves deceived ! Nought ye may know
Of dark futurity, the sable streams
Of Hell the fountain of your hidden lore,
Or yon bright spring of everlasting light !

First Chorus (CAJETAN).

Woe ! Woe ! thy tongue refrain !
O pause, nor thus with impious rage
The might of Heaven profane ;

The holy oracles are wise,—
Expect with awe thy coming Destinies !

ISABELLA.

My tongue shall speak as prompts my swelling heart,
My griefs shall cry to Heaven !—Why do we lift
Our suppliant hands, and at the sacred shrines
Kneel to adore ? Good easy dupes ! what win we
From faith and pious awe ?—to touch with prayers
The tenants of yon azure realms on high,
Were hard, as with an arrow's flight to pierce
The silvery moon. Hid is the womb of Time,
Impregnable to mortal glance, and deaf
The adamantine walls of Heaven rebound
The voice of anguish :—O, 'tis one, whate'er
The flight of birds,—the aspect of the stars !
The Book of Nature is a maze,—a dream
The Sage's art,—and every sign a falsehood !

Second Chorus (BOHEMUND).

Woe ! woe ! ill-fated woman, stay
Thy maddening blasphemies ;
Thou but disown'st with purblind eyes
The flaming orb of day.
Confess the Gods,—they dwell on high,—
They circle thee with awful majesty !

(*All the Knights.*)

They dwell on high,—
They circle thee with awful majesty !

BEATRICE.

Why hast thou saved thy daughter, and defied
The curse of Heaven, that marked me in thy womb
The child of woe? Short-sighted mother,—vain
Thy little arts to cheat the doom declared
By the all-wise interpreters, that knit
The far and near, and with prophetic ken,
See the late harvest spring in times unborn.
O thou hast brought destruction on thy race,
Withholding from the avenging Gods their prey ;
Threefold, with new embittered rage they ask
The direful penalty ; no thanks thy boon
Of life deserves,—the fatal gift was sorrow !

*Second Chorus (BERENGAR) Looking towards the door
with signs of agitation.*

Hark ! hark ! of brazen feet
The rattling din I hear ;
Of hell-born snakes the hissing tones are near !
Yes,—'tis the Furies' tread !

CAJETAN.

In crumbling ruin wide,

Fall, fall, thou roof, and sink thou trembling floor,
 That bear'st the dread unearthly stride !
 Ye sable damps arise !
 Mount from the abyss in smoky spray,
 And pall the brightness of the day !
 Vanish, ye guardian Powers !
 They come ! the avenging Deities !

DON CÆSAR, ISABELLA, BEATRICE. *The Chorus.*

[*On the entrance of DON CÆSAR, the Chorus station themselves before him imploringly. He remains standing alone in the centre of the stage.*]

BEATRICE.

Alas ! 'tis he—

ISABELLA.

(*Stepping to meet him.*)

My Cæsar ! O, my son !

And is it thus I meet thee ? Look ! behold !

The crime of hand accurst !—

[*She leads him to the corse.*]

First Chorus (CAJETAN, BERENGAR).

Break forth once more

Ye wounds ! Flow, flow, in swarthy flood,

Thou streaming gore !

ISABELLA.

Shuddering with earnest gaze, and motionless,
 Thou stand'st. Yes, there my hopes repose, and all
 That earth has of thy brother ; in the bud
 Nipped is your concord's tender flower, nor ever
 With beauteous fruit shall glad a mother's eyes.

DON CÆSAR.

Be comforted ; thy sons, with honest heart,
 To peace aspired, but Heaven's decree was blood !

ISABELLA.

I know thou lovedst him well ; I saw between ye,
 With joy, the bands of nature sweetly twined ;
 Thou wouldst have borne him in thy heart of hearts,
 With rich atonement of long wasted years !
 But see—fell Murder thwarts thy dear design,
 And nought remains but vengeance !

DON CÆSAR.

Come, my mother,
 This is no place for thee. O, haste and leave
 This sight of woe.

[He endeavours to drag her away.]

ISABELLA.

(Throwing herself into his arms.)

Thou liv'st ! I have a son !

BEATRICE.

Alas ! my mother !

DON CÆSAR.

On this faithful bosom
Weep out thy pains ;—nor lost thy son,—his love
Shall dwell immortal in thy Cæsar's breast.

First Chorus (CAJETAN, BERENGAR, MANFRED).

Break forth, ye wounds,—
Dumb witnesses !—the truth proclaim ;
Flow fast thou gory stream !

ISABELLA.

(Clasping the hands of Don Cæsar and Beatrice.)

My children !

DON CÆSAR.

Oh, 'tis ecstasy ! my mother,
To see her in thy arms !—henceforth in love
A daughter—sister—

ISABELLA *(interrupting him).*

Thou hast kept thy word,
My son ;—to thee I owe the rescued one ;
Yes, thou hast sent her—

DON CÆSAR (*in astonishment*).

Whom, my mother, sayst thou,
That I have sent?

ISABELLA.

She stands before thine eyes,—
Thy sister.

DON CÆSAR.

She! my sister?

ISABELLA.

Aye, what other?

DON CÆSAR.

My sister!

ISABELLA.

Thou hast sent her to me!

DON CÆSAR.

Horror!

His sister, too!

Chorus.

Woe! woe!

BEATRICE.

Alas! my mother!

ISABELLA.

Speak! I am all amaze!

DON CÆSAR.

Be cursed the day

When I was born !

ISABELLA.

Eternal powers !

DON CÆSAR.

Accurst

The womb that bore me ; curst thy secret arts,
 The spring of all this woe ; instant to crush thee,
 Though the dread thunder swept,—ne'er should this arm
 Refrain the bolts of death :—I slew my brother !
 Hear it and tremble ! in her arms I found him,—
 She was my love, my chosen bride ;—and he—
 My brother,—in her arms ! Thou hast heard all !
 If it be true—oh, if she be my sister—
 And his !—then I have done a deed that mocks
 The power of sacrifice and prayers to ope
 The gates of Mercy to my soul !

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

The tidings on thy heart dismayed
 Have burst, and nought remains ; behold !
 'Tis come, nor long delayed,
 Whate'er the warning seers foretold.

They spoke the message from on high,
Their lips proclaimed resistless destiny !
The mortal shall the curse fulfil,
Who seeks to turn predestined ill.

ISABELLA.

The Gods have done their worst ; if they be true
Or false, 'tis one—for nothing they can add
To this—the measure of their rage is full.
Why should I tremble that have nought to fear ?
My darling son lies murdered, and the living
I call my son no more. Oh ! I have borne
And nourished at my breast a basilisk
That stung my best-loved child. My daughter, haste,
And leave this house of horrors—I devote it
To the avenging Fiends.—In evil hour,
'Twas crime that brought me hither, and of crime
The victim I depart. Unwillingly
I came—in sorrow I have lived—despairing
I quit these halls ; on me, the innocent,
Descends this weight of woe ! Enough—'tis shown
That Heaven is just, and oracles are true !

Exit, followed by DIEGO.

BEATRICE. DON CÆSAR. *The Chorus.*

DON CÆSAR.

(*Detaining BEATRICE.*)

My sister, wouldst thou leave me? On this head
A mother's curse may fall—a brother's blood
Cry with accusing voice to Heaven—all Nature
Invoke eternal vengeance on my soul—
But thou—Oh! curse me not—I cannot bear it!

[BEATRICE *points with averted eyes to the body.*

I have not slain thy lover! 'twas thy brother
And mine that fell beneath my sword; and near
As the departed one the living owns
The ties of blood: remember, too, 'tis I
That most a sister's pity need—for pure
His spirit winged its flight, and I am guilty!

[BEATRICE *bursts into an agony of tears.*

Weep! I will blend my tears with thine—nay, more,
I will avenge thy brother; but the lover,—
Weep not for him—thy passionate yearning tears
My inmost heart. Oh! from the boundless depths
Of our affliction, let me gather this,
The last and only comfort—but to know
That we are dear alike. One lot fulfilled
Has made our rights and wretchedness the same;

Entangled in one snare we fall together,
 Three hapless victims of un pitying Fate,
 And share the mournful privilege of tears.
 But when I think that for the lover more
 Than for the brother bursts thy sorrow's tide,
 Then rage and envy mingle with my pain,
 And Hope's last balm forsakes my withering soul!—
 Nor joyful, as beseems, can I requite
 This injured Shade:—yet after him content
 To Mercy's throne my contrite spirit shall fly,
 Sped by this hand—if dying I may know
 That in one urn our ashes shall repose,
 With pious office of a sister's care.

[He throws his arms around her with passionate tenderness.]

I loved thee, as I ne'er had loved before,
 When thou wert strange; and that I bear the curse
 Of brother's blood, 'tis but because I loved thee
 With measureless transport: love was all my guilt.
 But now thou art my sister, and I claim
 Soft pity's tribute.

[He regards her with enquiring glances, and an air of painful suspense—then turns away with vehemence.]

No! in this dread presence
 I cannot bear these tears—my courage flies,
 And doubt distracts my soul. Go, weep in secret—

Leave me in error's maze—but never, never,
 Behold me more : I will not look again
 On thee, nor on thy mother. Oh ! how passion
 Laid bare her secret heart ! She never loved me !
 She mourned her best-loved son—that was her cry
 Of grief—and nought was mine but show of fondness !
 And thou art false as she ! make no disguise—
 Recoil with horror from my sight—this form
 Shall never shock thee more—begone for ever ! [*Exit.*]

*[She stands irresolute in a tumult of conflicting
 passions—then tears herself from the spot.]*

Chorus (CAJETAN.)

Happy the man—his lot I prize—
 That far from pomps and turmoil vain,
 Child-like on Nature's bosom lies
 Amid the stillness of the plain.
 My heart is sad in the princely hall,
 When from the towering pride of state
 I see with headlong ruin fall,
 How swift ! the good and great !

 And he from Fortune's storms at rest,
 Smiles in the quiet haven laid,
 Who, timely warned, has owned how blest
 The refuge of the cloistered shade ;

To honour's race has bade farewell,
 Its idle joys and empty shows,
 Insatiate wishes learned to quell,
 And lulled in Wisdom's calm repose :
 No more shall Passion's maddening brood
 Impel the busy scenes to try,
 Nor on his peaceful cell intrude
 The form of sad humanity !
 Mid crowds and strife each mortal ill
 Abides—the grisly train of woe
 Shuns like the Pest the breezy hill
 To haunt the smoky marts below.

(BERENGAR, BOHEMUND, and MANFRED.)

On the mountains is freedom ! the breath of decay
 Never sullies the fresh flowing air ;
 O Nature is perfect wherever we stray,
 'Tis man that deforms it with care.

The whole Chorus repeats

On the mountains is freedom, &c. &c.

DON CÆSAR. *The Chorus.*

DON CÆSAR (*more collected.*)

I use the princely rights—'tis the last time—
 To give this body to the ground, and pay
 Fit honours to the dead.—So mark, my friends,

My bosom's firm resolve, and quick fulfill
 Your lord's behest. Fresh in your memory lives
 The mournful pomp, when to the tomb ye bore
 So late my royal sire ; scarce in these halls
 Are stilled the echoes of the funeral wail,
 Another corse succeeds, and in the grave
 Weighs down its fellow-dust—almost our torch,
 With borrowed lustre from the last, may pierce
 The monumental gloom ; and on the steps
 Blend in one throng confused each mourning train.
 Then in the sacred royal dome that guards
 The ashes of my sire, prepare with speed
 The funeral rites ; unseen of mortal eye,
 And noiseless be your task—let all be graced,
 As then, with circumstance of kingly state.

BOHEMUND.

My Prince, it shall be quickly done ; for still
 Upreared the gorgeous catafalque recalls
 The dread solemnity : no hand disturbed
 The edifice of death.

DON CÆSAR.

The yawning grave
 Amid the haunts of life ? no goodly sign
 Was this : the rites fulfilled, why lingered yet
 The trappings of the funeral show ?

BOHEMUND.

Your strife

With fresh embittered hate o'er all Messina
 Woke Discord's maddening flames, and from the dead
 Our cares withdrew—so desolate remained,
 And closed, the sanctuary.

DON CÆSAR.

Make no delay ;

This very night fulfil your task, for well
 Beseems the midnight gloom ! to-morrow's sun
 Shall find this palace cleansed of every stain,
 And light a happier race.

*[Exit the Second Chorus with the body of
 Don Manuel.]*

CAJETAN.

Shall I invite

The brotherhood of monks, with rites ordained
 By Holy Church of old, to celebrate
 The office of departed souls, and hymn
 The buried one to everlasting rest ?

DON CÆSAR.

Their strains above my tomb shall sound for ever
 Amid the torches blaze—no solemn rites
 Beseem this day, when gory murder scares
 Heaven's pardoning grace.

CAJETAN.

O, let not wild despair
 Tempt thee to impious rash resolve. My Prince,
 No mortal arm shall e'er avenge this deed ;
 And penance calms, with soft atoning power,
 The rage of Heaven.

DON CÆSAR.

If for eternal justice
 Earth has no minister, myself shall wield
 The avenging sword ; though Heaven, with gracious ear,
 Inclines to sinners' prayers, with blood alone
 Atoned is murder's guilt.

CAJETAN.

To stem the tide
 Of dire misfortune, that with maddening rage
 Bursts o'er your house, were nobler than to pile
 Accumulated woe.

DON CÆSAR.

The curse of old
 Shall die with me ! Death self-imposed alone
 Can break the chain of Fate.

CAJETAN.

Thou ow'st thyself
 A sovereign to this orphaned land,—by thee
 Robbed of its other lord !

DON CÆSAR.

The avenging Gods
Demand their prey—some other Deity
May guard the living!

CAJETAN.

Wide as e'er the sun
In glory beams, the realm of Hope extends ;
But,—oh remember !—nothing can we gain
From death !

DON CÆSAR.

Remember thou thy vassal's duty,—
Remember, and be silent ! Leave to me
To follow as I list the spirit of power,
That leads me to the goal. No happy one
May look into my breast ; but if thy prince
Owns not a subject's homage, dread at least
The murderer !—the accurst !—and to the head
Of the unhappy—sacred to the Gods—
Give honour due. The pangs that rend my soul—
What I have suffered—what I feel—have left
No place for earthly thoughts !

DONNA ISABELLA. DON CÆSAR. *The Chorus.*

ISABELLA

(Enters with hesitating steps, and looks irresolutely towards Don Cæsar; at last she approaches, and addresses him with collected tones).

I thought mine eyes should never see thee more ;—
 This was my vow of anguish ! O, my son,
 How quickly all a mother's stern resolves
 Melt into air. 'Twas but the cry of rage
 That stifled nature's pleading voice ; but now
 What tidings of mysterious import call me
 Forth from the desolate chambers of my sorrow ?
 Shall I believe it ?—is it true ?—one day
 Robs me of both my sons ?

Chorus.

Behold ! with willing steps and free,
 Thy son prepares to tread
 The paths of dark eternity,—
 The silent mansions of the dead.
 My prayers are vain ; but thou with soft control
 Of all a mother's anguish melt his soul.

ISABELLA.

I call the curses back,—that in the phrenzy

Of blind despair on thy beloved head
 I poured. A mother may not curse the child
 That from her nourishing breast drew life, and gave
 Sweet recompense of all a mother's pains,—
 Heaven would not hear the impious vows ; they fell
 With quick rebound, and heavy with my tears,
 Down from the flaming vault.

Live ! live ! my son !

For I may rather bear to look on thee—
 The murderer of one child—than weep for both !

DON CÆSAR.

Heedless and vain, my mother, are thy prayers
 For me and for thyself ;—I have no place
 Among the living ;—if thine eyes may brook
 The murderer's sight abhorred,—I could not bear
 The mute reproach of thy eternal sorrow.

ISABELLA.

Silent or loud, my son, reproach shall never
 Disturb thy breast,—ne'er in these halls shall sound
 The voice of anguish ; gently on my tears
 My griefs shall flow away :—the sport alike
 Of pitiless Fate, together we will mourn,
 And veil the deed of blood.

DON CÆSAR

(With a faltering voice, and taking her hand).

Thus it shall be,

My mother,—thus with silent, gentle woe
 Thy grief shall fade ; but when one common tomb
 The murderer and his victim closes round—
 When o'er our dust one monumental stone
 Is rolled—the curse shall cease—thy love no more
 Unequal bless thy sons—the precious tears
 Thine eyes of beauty weep, shall sanctify
 Alike our memories. Yes ! in death are quenched
 The fires of rage ; and Hatred owns subdued,
 The mighty reconciler.—Pity bends
 An angel form above the funeral urn,
 With weeping dear embrace. Then to the tomb
 Stay not my passage :—Oh ! forbid me not,
 Thus with atoning sacrifice to quell
 The curse of Heaven.

ISABELLA.

All Christendom is rich
 In shrines of mercy, where the troubled heart
 May find repose. Oh ! many a heavy burden
 Have sinners in Loretto's mansion laid ;
 And Heaven's peculiar blessing breathes around
 The grave that has redeemed the world. The prayers

Of the devout are precious—fraught with store
Of grace they bring forgiveness from the skies,
And on the soil by gory murder stained
Shall rise the purifying fane.

DON CÆSAR.

We pluck

The arrow from the wound,—but the torn heart
Shall ne'er be healed. Let him who can, drag on
A weary life of penance and of pain,
To cleanse the spot of everlasting guilt ;—
I would not live the victim of despair ;
No! I must meet with beaming eye the smile
Of happy ones, and breathe erect the air
Of liberty and joy. While yet alike
We shared thy love, then o'er my days of youth
Pale Envy cast his withering shade ; and now,
Think'st thou my heart could brook the dearer ties
That bind thee in thy sorrow to the dead ?
Death, in his undecaying palace throned,
To the pure diamond of perfect virtue
Sublimes the mortal, and with chastening fire
Each gathered stain of frail humanity
Purges and burns away : high as the stars
Tower o'er this earthly sphere, he soars above me ;
And as by ancient hate dissevered long,
Brethren and equal denizens we lived,

So now my restless soul with envy pines
 That he has won from me the glorious prize
 Of immortality, and like a God
 In memory marches on to times unborn !

ISABELLA.

My sons ! why have I called you to Messina
 To find for each a grave ? I brought ye hither
 To calm your strife to peace. Lo ! Fate has turned
 My hopes to blank despair.

DON CÆSAR.

Whate'er was spoke,
 My mother, is fulfilled ! Blame not the end
 By Heaven ordained. We trode our father's halls
 With hopes of peace ; and reconciled for ever,
 Together we shall sleep in death.

ISABELLA.

My son,
 Live for thy mother ! In the stranger's land,
 Say, wouldst thou leave me friendless and alone,
 To cruel scorn a prey—no filial arm
 To shield my helpless age ?

DON CÆSAR.

When all the world
 With heartless taunts pursues thee, to our grave

For refuge fly, my mother, and invoke
 Thy sons' divinity—we shall be Gods!
 And we will hear thy prayers—and as the Twins
 Of Heaven a beaming star of comfort shine
 To the tost shipman—we will hover near thee
 With present help, and soothe thy troubled soul!

ISABELLA.

Live—for thy mother, live, my son—
 Must I lose all?

[She throws her arms about him with passionate emotion. He gently disengages himself, and turning his face away, extends to her his hand.]

DON CÆSAR.

Farewell!

ISABELLA.

I can no more!
 Too well my tortured bosom owns how weak
 A mother's prayers: a mightier voice shall sound
 Resistless on thy heart.

[She goes towards the entrance of the scene.]

My daughter, come!

A brother calls him to the realms of night;
 Perchance with golden hues of earthly joy
 The sister, the beloved, may gently lure
 The wanderer to life again.

[BEATRICE appears at the entrance of the scene.]

DONNA ISABELLA, DON CÆSAR, *and the Chorus.*

DON CÆSAR.

(*On seeing her, covers his face with his hands.*)

My mother!

What hast thou done?

ISABELLA.

(*Leading BEATRICE forwards.*)

A mother's prayers are vain!

Kneel at his feet—conjure him—melt his heart!

Oh! bid him live!

DON CÆSAR.

Deceitful mother, thus

Thou triest thy son! and wouldst thou stir my soul

Again to passion's strife, and make the sun

Beloved once more, now when I tread the paths

Of everlasting night? See where he stands,

Angel of life!—and wondrous beautiful,

Shakes from his plenteous horn the fragrant store

Of golden fruits and flowers, that breathe around

Divinest airs of joy;—my heart awakes

In the warm sunbeam—hope returns, and life

Thrills in my breast anew.

ISABELLA (*to BEATRICE*).

Thou wilt prevail!

Or none! Implore him that he live, nor rob

The staff and comfort of our days.

BEATRICE.

The loved one
 A sacrifice demands ; Oh, let me die
 To soothe a brother's shade :—yes ! I will be
 The victim !—e'er I saw the light foredoomed
 To death, I live a wrong to Heaven ! The curse
 Pursues me still—'twas I that slew thy son,—
 I waked the slumbering furies of their strife,—
 Be mine the atoning blood !

CAJETAN.

Ill-fated mother !
 Impatient all thy children haste to death,
 And leave thee on the desolate waste alone
 Of joyless life.

BEATRICE.

Oh, spare thy precious days
 For Nature's band ;—thy mother needs a son ;
 My brother, live for her ! Light were the pang
 To lose a daughter—but a moment shown,
 Then snatched away !

DON CÆSAR (*with deep emotion*).

'Tis one to live or die,
 Blest with a sister's love !

BEATRICE.

Say,—dost thou envy
 Thy brother's ashes ?

DON CÆSAR.

In thy grief he lives
A hallowed life !—my doom is death for ever !

BEATRICE.

My brother !

DON CÆSAR.

Sister ! are thy tears for me ?

BEATRICE.

Live for our mother !

DON CÆSAR (*dropping her hand, and stepping back*).

For our mother ?

BEATRICE (*hiding her head in his breast*).

Live

For her and for thy sister !

Chorus (BOHEMUND).

She has won !

Resistless are her prayers. Despairing mother

Awake to hope again—his choice is made !

Thy son shall live !

[*At this moment, an anthem is heard. The folding doors are thrown open, and in the Church is seen the Catafalque erected, and the coffin surrounded with candlesticks.*

DON CÆSAR.

(Turning to the coffin.)

I will not rob thee, brother!

The sacrifice is thine :—Hark ! from the tomb,
 Mightier than mother's tears, or sister's love,
 Thy voice resistless cries—my arms enfold
 A treasure, potent with celestial joys,
 To deck this earthly sphere, and make a lot
 Worthy the Gods ! but shall I live in bliss,
 While in the tomb thy sainted innocence
 Sleeps unavenged ? Thou, Ruler of our days,
 All just—all wise—let not thy world behold
 The unequal share—enough—I saw her tears—
 They flowed for me.—I am content.—My brother !
 I come !

*[He stabs himself with a dagger, and falls dead
 at his sister's feet. She throws herself into
 her mother's arms.]*

Chorus (CAJETAN). After a deep silence.

In dread amaze I stand, nor know
 If I should mourn his fate. One truth revealed
 Speaks in my breast ;—no good supreme is life ;
 But of all earthly ills the chief is Guilt !

THE END.





